

**SUPPORTING STUDENTS' CHINESE LEARNING
THROUGH THE PLATFORM OF SOCIAL MEDIA -
EDMODO**

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3 March, 2015

Statement of Authentication

I declare that except where due acknowledgement has been made, this research is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.



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March 3, 2015

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List of Abbreviations

ACTEL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language
AEF	Asia Education Foundation
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CALL	Computer Assisted Language Learning
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
DEC	Department of Education and Communities
EI	Emotional Intelligence
EP	Evaluation Practices
Five Cs	Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IT	Information Technology
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NSW	New South Wales
ROSETE	Research Oriented, School Engaged, Teacher Education
SLL	Second Language Learning
SLT	Second Language Teaching
SNSs	Social Networking Sites
SRL	Self-Regulated Learning
TCFL	Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language
UWS	University of Western Sydney
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Abstract

From an educational perspective this thesis explores the social media platform Edmodo as a method to support Chinese language teaching and learning in Australian public primary schools. It focuses on a teacher-researcher's exploration of using information technology – social media, to make Chinese learnable for young beginning learners. In this context the research is timely and significant. The research is carried out as a qualitative case study that involves collecting and analysing data from teaching Chinese language in BR Public School.

The aim of this study is to explore the strategies of using social media, Edmodo, to facilitate young students' learning of Chinese by creating a positive teaching and learning environment where off-class, online activities complement classroom teaching. The first of the evidentiary chapters (Chapter 4) points out the existing challenges of class-based, text-based approaches to teaching and learning Chinese. A full description of these challenges inspired the idea of incorporating Edmodo to support students' learning. The second (Chapter 5) and third (Chapter 6) evidentiary chapters foreground the implementation of social media strategies and activities in the teaching of Chinese. The findings (Chapter 7) indicate that Edmodo can be used in a supporting role to facilitate students' successful learning of Chinese language.

In the case of this project, an overall assessment of the teacher-research method of professional learning in the context of Chinese language education in an Australian public primary school is that it proved to be a beneficial process.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background context for the emergence of the research questions, including the social context, Web 2.0 era and the current Australian educational conditions for Chinese language teaching and learning. This chapter also outlines the significance of this research and foregrounds the teacher-researcher's previous experiences as these relate to the project. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis.

1.1. Social context

This research topic has investigated a method of second language learning through the platform of social media, that is, how social media can facilitate students' language learning. The explosive development of social media and its transformation of people's lives created the impetus for this study. With the expansion of Information Technology, tremendous changes have occurred in the area of education. One notable feature has been the advancement in classroom hardware facilities and teaching materials. At the same time people's daily lives have become more closely

connected to different types of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Tumblr.

One distinctive characteristic of social media is its timeliness. This world of convergent, real-time web experiences combined with the social web has created a semiotic world in which users have almost immediate access to what is being said in their social networks at any given moment (Michele, 2011).

Groups of ‘hot’ social Webs continually spring up, along with their invisible and far-reaching influence in many areas; new buzzwords constantly appear on the Internet; online technology has been gradually replacing the conventional paper press, and information is shared around the world quickly and efficiently. For example:

Folks were tweeting 5000 times a day in 2007. By 2008, that number was 300000, and by 2009 it had grown to 2.5 million per day. Tweets grew 1400% last year to 35 million per day. Today, we are seeing 50 million tweets per day – that’s an average of 600 tweets per second (Zappavigna, 2012, p.4).

Information has now become portable. With the proliferation of smart phones and social networking apps installed on an array of digital gadgets, a tempting and convenient activity has become commonplace for people to constantly check for updated information, day and night. This can also be applied to language learning.

One reason for the prevalence of social media is that it offers users more accessible opportunities to express or post their ideas on public platforms. The Internet has privacy and free bulletin functions, encouraging users to express their thoughts

online and help nourish a positive atmosphere for information exchange (Michele, 2011).

1.1.1 Social context – implication for education

The education system has not been isolated from the impact of social media and if education is to be relevant to today's students, it can no longer be constrained by traditional methods of learning based on text books or from teachers' notes on a blackboard. Social media could be drawn upon to create a more dynamic learning environment, one in which students enjoy and are not only familiar with, but experts in second language learning (SLL). SLL can be thought of as a quite dynamic subject itself, just like the Internet and a process which needs to be constantly enriched with new vocabularies, phrases and even cultures being described, in common terms, as the 'Information Explosion'.

As a consequence, of the World Wide Web and social media there has been an Information Explosion over the past few decades. Knowledge rapidly updates and information massively accumulates. Coupling this research topic with the social factors mentioned above, inquiry into the use of social media as a modern tool to facilitate SLL can be looked upon as a worthwhile endeavour. From within the tools of social media, the popular online learning social platform – Edmodo – has been chosen as the focus of this research.

1.2 Web 2.0 Era

According to Willies (2009), Web 2.0 describes web sites that use technology beyond the static pages of earlier web sites. The term was coined in 1999 by Darcy DiNucci and popularised by Tim O'Reilly at the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference in late 2004. Web 2.0 has revitalised the World Wide Web, but beyond the technical renewal, it has incorporated an accumulative and generative way of information sharing and creation.

A Web 2.0 site provides opportunities for users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community; this contrasts to websites where people are limited to the passive viewing of content. Examples of Web 2.0 include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, folksonomies, video sharing sites, hosted services, web applications, and mashups (Willies, 2009).

In recent years, Internet technology in education has evolved from being primarily used to distribute course materials, communicate and evaluate, to enhancing educational processes that support collaborative student learning (Maloney, 2007). With blogs, wikis and social networking sites (SNSs), the Internet has entered the new era of Web 2.0, which goes beyond merely connecting people to information (Warschauer, 2009). Facebook and other SNSs are becoming more prevalent in educational environments, with educators exploring how such tools can be used for teaching and learning (Schwartz and Terris, 2009).

1.2.1 Web 2.0 era – implication for education

As we continue within the Web 2.0 era, we cannot overlook the opportunities and the transformation it can bring to enliven education. Social networking sites are designed with humanised features, and as such can be incorporated into collaborative learning communities, chat channels, notice boards, instant information updating, and discussion forums. Interactive tools also help to enhance users' cooperation towards the same learning goal.

From a pedagogical perspective, computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools offer a variety of benefits, such as increased potential for student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction outside of traditional class time (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000). This advantage may dramatically alter our concepts of learning, but at the same time has implications for teachers' workloads and privacy for all concerned.

Research relating to CMC and Web 2.0 has provided evidence of positive outcomes of this pedagogical approach. Maloney (2007) has argued that Web 2.0 technology can be helpful in strengthening teacher education and students' reflections about their own learning. Kok (2008) has emphasised the potential for collaborative learning between students and teachers by using social network media. Ajjan and Hartshorne (2008) evaluated teaching staff's awareness of the benefits of and preparedness for the use of Web 2.0 technology in the classroom and reported that Web 2.0 technologies can improve students' learning and writing ability and change their role 'from a passive to an active learner'.

1.3 Chinese language teaching and learning – Australian context

In today's world, China has gradually become a powerful force among developing countries, economically, politically and in terms of trade alliances. As China becomes an increasingly influential player on the world stage, there has been an upswing in interest, particularly in the West, to have citizens fluent in Chinese. Orton (2008, p. 5) lists several factors supporting the urgent need for Australians to learn Chinese:

China is a geographical neighbour, the largest trading partner of Australia, a rising world economic entity, a major source of immigrant workforce and sees the largest portion of its tourists going to Australia. As a consequence, in order to promote a deepening relationship with China both economically and socially, it requires a substantial pool of Australians in a range of sectors who deeply understand China and can speak Chinese well (Orton, 2008, p.5).

Asia literacy is a term frequently emphasised in current foreign languages learning in Australia. The National Statement on Asia Literacy in Australian Schools from 2011-2012 (Asia Education Foundation, 2011), identifies the broad knowledge, skills and understandings required by all students to achieve Asia literacy. Developed by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF), the National Statement supports the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008), which acknowledges the clear demand for all Australians to become Asia literate through their school education. All educators and parents are encouraged to read the

document to better understand the six key interconnected areas that need to be addressed in order to work together to deliver Asian literacy (Orton, 2008).

Although these two national frameworks provide guidance for Asia literacy and the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL) in schools, the current outcomes fall short of expectation. Chen (2015, p. 933) has stated that only 1.5% of New South Wales Year 12 students study Chinese language (3% nationally), 94% of whom come from a Chinese background. Yule (2007) then purports that Chinese language teaching and learning should be targeted in the earlier years of schooling. Similarly figures confirmed by Orton (2008, p.8) showed that by the closed of 2007, fewer than 20% of Australians working in China could speak the language, with only 10% of these expatriates having studied even one China-related subject.

The study of Asia is a cross-curriculum priority in the Australian school curriculum (ACARA, 2011) within which, the learning of Chinese language in Australian schools has strong political support. *The National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy* (NALSAS) achieved an increased participation rate in the studies of Asian languages and cultures across the country. The Australian Government also proposed the target that by 2020 at least 12% of students exiting Year 12 would be fluent in one of the target Asian languages – Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean (Chen, 2015, p. 933). The number of schools offering Chinese language classes has also increased the demand for qualified and competent Chinese language teachers (Wang, Moloney and Li, 2013).

1.3.1 Learning Chinese in multicultural Australia

Australia is a modern multilingual and multicultural society. The increasing linguistic and cultural demographic diversity, and a national agenda of multiculturalism has provided a positive context within which second language learning has become mainstream in most Australian schools with associated curriculum development for foreign language learning being underway for over two decades (Scarino, 2014).

Chinese, as one of the most locally spoken foreign languages in Australia, has emerged as a priority language here and also beyond the Asia-Pacific region (Wang, Moloney and Li, 2013). The long history of migration from China to Australia has also shaped the context of Chinese language learning in school education in Australia (Scarino, 2012).

1.3.2 Qualifications of Chinese language teachers

The lack of suitably qualified Chinese teachers in Australian schools has arisen as a serious issue impacting on the student outcomes at Year 12 level. Orton (2008, p. 8) has reported that 90% of Chinese teachers in Australia are native Chinese speakers (L1), with the remaining minority group of Chinese teachers, having Chinese as their second language (L2). Native Chinese speaking teachers may conduct excellent lessons on authentic pronunciation of tones and accurate grammar, but because they are not familiar with the Australian educational and cultural context, it could be a challenge for them to plan and implement suitable approaches for teaching Australian school students learning Chinese language. In comparison Chinese L2

teachers surely have the advantage of understanding the Australian context, but their knowledge of the Chinese language itself is not as advanced as L1 teachers (Orton, 2008).

Chinese language teaching and learning in Australian schools has not reached its full potential as outlined above. One approach to addressing this would be to implement new pedagogical approaches that connect to students' daily lives, and by drawing on their interest in social media encourage their interest in continuing their studies.

1.4 Research issues – a cautionary note

As the ideas for this research developed several issues unfolded requiring additional consideration.

Using social media as a teaching strategy with younger children (aged 6-9 years) may be introducing them into a world they have yet to experience, which may have implications for parents.

This research topic focuses on how social media can facilitate student's language learning. This might create controversies and concerns, such as how to balance technology use and classroom teaching. Language teaching is formally conducted in class; the cautionary note is how to supervise student's use of technologies to prevent their excessive use; and how technologies can be used as a tool to keep the language learning continuity from school to the home setting.

Young people generally have great interest in using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. However, they mainly use them for entertainment and recreational purposes. To guide them to use social media for learning a language requires further effective strategies.

The above contexts have laid the foundation for the development of the research question and the contributory questions specific to this project.

1.5 Research questions

The overarching research question is proposed as follows:

Main Research Question

How can social media (Edmodo in this case) best exert a supporting role in facilitating students' Chinese language learning?

Contributory research questions

1. Is there a space within current Chinese language teaching and learning pedagogies to introduce Edmodo?
2. In what ways/strategies can Edmodo be used to supplement on-class teaching and enhance students' Chinese language learning?
3. What activities can be implemented to support Chinese language learning through Edmodo?

The primary research question was to discover the best way to embody a positive language learning environment through the use of social media. In this research, a

popular educational website – Edmodo was chosen as the social media tool to conduct the off-class teaching activities. As this social media pedagogy has not been commonly used in Australian schools, the significance of this research is now presented.

1.6 Research significance

This research is innovative and experimental as more commonly introduced technology in schools is school-based and often game-based and usually does not include incorporating social media. In-class and off-class study are both critical learning sites and this is one study which will investigate this issue.

Secondly, learning a foreign language through the platform of social media could create new paths for future education. Over the years, Internet communication applications such as email, instant messaging, and blogging, have become well-established in the lives of adolescents, and the Internet has become an important social context for adolescent development (Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, 2005). More recently, online social networking sites (SNSs), such as MySpace and Facebook, which are web-based services that allow individuals to construct public or semi-public profiles, connect with other users, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system, have become common online destinations for adolescents (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). With the ever-growing popularity of computer-mediated communication (National School Boards Association, 2007), new opportunities for second-language learning and teaching are possible. Research has also demonstrated the positive impact of using Web 2.0 tools, such as blogs and wikis for second language learning (Stutzman, 2006). This

research is timely and significant in this context, as it offers an innovative approach to teaching Chinese in ways that focus on making it learnable.

Thirdly, for second language learning, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has advocated applying the ‘five Cs’ in language learning: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Basically, communication always comes first in language learning. Connections refer to bridges to other disciplines and information acquisition, expanding learner ideas of ‘context-area’ reading and functional writing across disciplines (Yang and Chen, 2006). Comparisons are mainly made by students with their insights and analysis of the target language as well as drawing on their own language and culture respectively. The final ‘C’ is communities, which refers to learners being part of many communities – school, local and in the case of this research, online. Rich informative resources are always available on the Internet and displayed in various forms, such as those streaming ‘plug-in’ technologies (Yang and Chen, 2006). This research is significant in terms of the ACTFL categories and further extends the idea of a learning community into an online space.

Finally, this research has significance in terms of curriculum development for second languages education in Australia. Scarino (2014) outlines that over the past two decades there has been many obstacles and difficulties in SL curriculum development at both national and state levels. This research has investigated a new approach to foreign language learning. This also has implications for Chinese language teachers and teacher education with an emphasis on using social media as a modern pedagogy.

1.7 Personal experience

This section discusses the impact of the teacher-researcher's personal experiences as a student and as an ethnic Chinese teacher of Chinese language in public schools in Sydney.

1.7.1 Previous study experience

This teacher-researcher completed a bachelor's degree with an English Literature major in June, 2013. Following this came an interest in the areas of education and communication, namely information technology, specialising in social networking and new media. Impressive was the tremendous data transformative revolution that prevails nowadays. There is disagreement as to the role that all forms of social networking and media were playing in people's lives. At the same time, some inevitable problems such as privacy invasion and adolescents' Internet addiction can be problematic and challenging. However, there is the possibility to take advantage of this modern development and turn it into something facilitative to the field of education. In much the same way as the 'flourishing' online shop and telemedicine, education is no longer restricted to a classroom with limited space. By using social networking and media tools, study could be streamlined and continuous.

As a sophomore, a chat group was organised with several classmates from different universities. In this space it was possible to share similar ideas, interests, topics and learning goals. Due to various subjects and schedules differed connecting physically was impossible; however, smart phones and digital gadgets rendered opportunities to solve this challenge. Ideas were exchanged through this chat group where conversations and information were recorded into an online database. Records were

easily located and relocated by accessing the ‘trail’ history to find records. During the four-year-study period, a large amount of information was accumulated in this online chat group; the group were the generators and updaters of information. Information exchange and communication was convenient and speedy, despite the challenges of geographical distance and time availability. A mentor was also invited to join this group as this method of communication bridged workload and time off campus and enabled convenient conversations around our courses and assignments. This virtual community indeed offered many learning opportunities. Every learner in this community was eager to express their ideas, and became active information contributors, through this relaxed and positive learning environment.

In addition the teacher-researcher also studied a communication course in university the focus of which was a social media exploration. Not only did this study highlight how social media can exert an assignable effect in people’s lives, it also enabled the tracking of changes in society, such as politics, business, health care and education. As the graduation essay, the topic chosen combined English as a second language in a Chinese high school implementing multiple methods such as multi-media and an Internet learning group. Data were collected via observations at the internship school and online dialogues with students. Based on these previous experienced an enthusiasm developed to undertake a something similar in a new social context – Australia.

1.7.2 Teaching experience

When this research commenced the teacher-researcher had been assigned as a volunteer Chinese language teacher in three primary schools in Sydney. Students in

two schools had received basic Chinese lessons in the preceding term, however the retention of their learning was such that the classroom teachers suggested that lessons needed to be at the beginning level – the basics. The students at the third school had not experienced any Chinese language lessons. On the first day the students were very excited to be learning this new language. For beginning learners, curiosity and interest are the crucial stimulants in starting to learn a new language. At the same time, there is a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of the teacher to ensure students’ successful learning. Therefore ‘how to grab and retain students’ learning enthusiasm’ was set as the initial teaching goal – to plan student centred lessons.

The first phase of this teaching experience was an observational period of one full week observing local Australian teachers’ implementation of their approaches and strategies, paying particular attention to their classroom language, manner and positive reinforcements. Based on those observations a comparison of Chinese and Australian classroom learning environments was drawn up (Table 1.1)

Table 1.1: Differences between Chinese and Australian classrooms

Australian classroom environment	Chinese classroom environment
Technology-assisted teaching	Textbook-based teaching
Relaxed learning atmosphere	Comparatively rigid learning environment
Student-centred	Teacher-centred
Flexible lesson schedule	Fixed lesson plans
Learning through play, intentional teaching	Traditional learning activities

One major distinction was the technology-assisted classroom environment in Australian schools. Most classrooms in public schools are equipped with a multi-functioned smart board, where ideas can be freely written, but also where the learning materials and lessons are creative and engaging. Teachers and students can generate impromptu learning materials from the Internet which can then be connected to the smart board. YouTube is one of the most frequently used social media websites in classrooms.

With this background the decision was made to explore the potential of a broader concept of ‘learning environment’ – one which could go beyond the restrictions of time and space. The ‘Information Explosion’ era is part of this generation, where numerous data are generated every second, and hence there is the opportunity to utilise these rich and accessible resources around us in daily teaching. A positive learning environment can go beyond the ‘traditional’ and be dynamic and interesting. Welcome to the world of Web 2.0!

1.8 Outline of thesis

The overall structure of this thesis has been organized into seven chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive introduction to the research topic including the social context, the overall significance of this research and the research questions which have guided the research. The teacher-researcher’s personal experiences of the education systems in China and Australia have also provided some background to this research.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature relating to L1/L2 transfer, scaffolding and social media as teaching strategies for second language teaching. The section on social media is extended to include its use as a virtual learning environment, its growth and popularity and how it connects to Web 2.0. The chapter also includes a detailed review of Edmodo's features and functions.

Chapter 3 provides the details of the methodology used in this research. This chapter begins with the justification for choosing qualitative research as the most suitable methodology for this project followed by an outline of the research methods and the research design – case study. Methods of data collection and analysis are also fully explained.

Chapter 4 focuses on the teacher-researcher's early experiences as a Chinese teacher in Australian public schools and explores the first contributory research question: *Is there a space within current Chinese language teaching and learning pedagogies to introduce Edmodo?* Actual situations as a volunteer Chinese teacher have been described and some of the limitations in traditional classroom teaching within the program have been highlighted. Research tools including reflective journals, interviews and questionnaires were used to collect information about students' Chinese learning experiences. Analysis of these data provided the evidence to justify the necessity of implementing Edmodo into Chinese language teaching and learning.

Chapter 5 presents the findings and evidence for an exploration of the second contributory research question: *In what ways/strategies can Edmodo be used to supplement on-class teaching?* Edmodo was introduced into supporting classroom teaching with participants ranging from students to teachers. This Chapter also

discusses the use of Edmodo and other information technology tools. Interviews, reflective journals and questions were analysed which led to the findings that L1/L2 transfer and scaffolding used in the initial stage of teaching Chinese language with Edmodo were successful strategies. Additional strategies for teaching Chinese with social networking (Edmodo) also are discussed in the final sections of Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 focuses on the data collected from network practices that were conducted during the students' increasing capabilities using Edmodo. It addresses the third contributory research question: *What activities can be implemented to support Chinese language learning through Edmodo?* The evidence was collected as the teacher-researcher introduced new Chinese language through the activities of 'Eyes on picture', 'Ears to music', 'Attention on video' and 'Body with games.' The analysis of these data provides evidence for the finding that Edmodo proved to have a successful supporting role in Chinese language teaching.

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the findings from each of the evidentiary chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). It will again underline the potential advantages in learning a second language through the platform of social media. In this chapter, several limitations as well as implications and recommendations for further research have been proposed.

CHAPTER 2

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING VIA SOCIAL NETWORKING: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the literature reviewed from topic-related journals, websites and books published in recent years. A literature review is an indispensable part of research as it provides the background information and sets the scene for the teacher-researcher to confidently undertake the research at hand.

This literature review begins with a focus on second language teaching (SLT) as this is the context within which this research was undertaken. Important teaching strategies for SLT are initially discussed, those being L1/L2 transfer and scaffolding. Sections 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 then turn the focus to a review of relevant literature related to social media in general and as an educational tool. Edmodo, as a social networking platform is explained and reviewed through available literature.

2.2 Second language teaching and learning

This section includes a presentation of literature related to general theories and research related to general L1/L2 transfer followed by a discussion of the strategies in SL teaching and learning.

2.2.1 L1/L2 Transfer

2.2.1.1 Teaching in L2 – no L1/L2 transfer

One approach in second language teaching and bilingual education programs privileges monolingualism, (immersion programs) whereby every lesson is planned and taught in the target language without reference to the learners' first language:

In the case of second and foreign language teaching it is assumed that instruction should be carried out, as far as possible, exclusively in the target language without recourse to students' first language (L1). In the case of bilingual and second language immersion programs, it has become axiomatic that the two languages should be kept rigidly separate (Cummins, 2008, p.65).

This quotation emphasises an exclusive method of learning the target language. It separates an intercultural view of language learning into independent branches, which means that, during the process, a mono-directional instruction would be implemented. However, this could inevitably restrain the learner's self-reflection and affect learning efficiency, especially with young learners who may be thinking in their L1. This can also apply to English speakers learning Chinese – without recourse to their first language, it could be more difficult for them to find a balanced point for

learning Chinese. Cummins argues against the ‘two solitudes’ assumption, presenting empirical evidence and theoretical ideas which indicate that this assumption has a negligible research basis:

When we free ourselves from exclusive reliance on monolingual instructional approaches, a wide variety of opportunities arise for teaching bilingual students by means of bilingual instructional strategies that acknowledge the reality of, and strongly promote, cross-language transfer Cummins (2008, p. 65).

2.2.1.2 Implementing L1/L2 transfer in teaching

Fernández and Gunashekar (2009) argue that utilising both L1 and L2 in language learning is a solid approach (see Figure 2.1). Through accessing students’ bilingual thinking patterns, a wider variety of learning choices would render more opportunities to find the best way for learning. With a better understanding of intercultural backgrounds, a better command of the language itself can be gained. The figure below represents the interconnection and transfer between ‘mother tongue code’, ‘foreign language code’ enables the establishment of metafunctions that assist L2 learning.

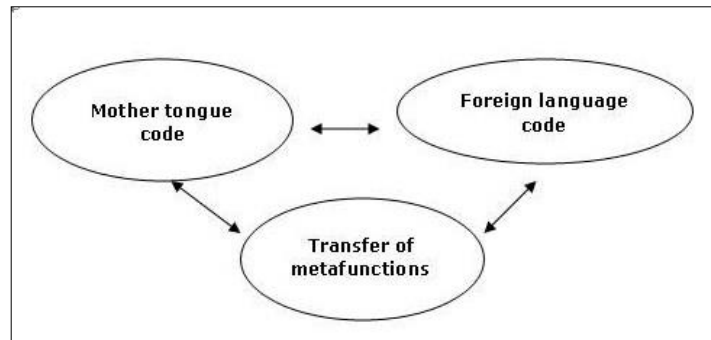


Figure 2.1: The dialectics of the L1 and L2

Source: Fernández and Gunashekar (2009)

(http://scielo.sld.cu/scielo.php?pid=S1024-94352009001200004&script=sci_arttext)

2.2.2 Teaching strategies for (L1/L2) transfer

Cummins (2008, p. 67) proposes that there are three major conditions for effective second language learning (SLL), that draw upon L1/L2 transfer during learning. These are: (a) engaging prior understandings, (b) scaffolding and (c) independence across languages.

2.2.2.1 Engaging prior understandings

Cummins (2008, p. 67) states student's prior knowledge is encoded in their L1, and this can be drawn upon during lessons designed learning of L2. Language learners' proficiency in their first language could be an effective stimulus in helping them to learn and understand the target language and its cultural background. Similarities can be found between two languages, and those same elements are beneficial for language learners to find a communicative agency during the learning process. At the same time, language learner's knowledge in their L1 will guide understandings of language and culture during the learning of an L2. That is, "new understandings are constructed on a foundation of existing understandings and experiences" (Donovan and Bransford cited in Cummins, 2008, p. 67). This explanation illustrates the

essential core value of L1/L2 transfer. A good command of first language helps to lay a solid foundation for further exploration in learning many other languages.

Cummins (2008) gives further strength to this stance by citing an example of three girls who collaborated in writing a short story: ‘The New Country’ in their L2 – English. They researched and wrote the story about their new country by sharing their experiences and language skills. Each girl had a different level of English but they were all fluent in Urdu. They were able to discuss in their own language through efficient verbal communication to share ideas and thoughts. They then successfully wrote their first draft in English. Drawing on their L1 (Urdu) had successfully impacted on their writing in L2 (English).

Thus this principle suggests that teachers of Chinese to English speaking students “should explicitly attempt to activate students’ prior knowledge and build relevant background knowledge as necessary” (Cummins, 2008, p. 68).

2.2.2.2 Scaffolding

To English speaking students learning Chinese, there are numerous obstacles and difficulties during the learning process, and that is why a research concerning ‘how to make Chinese learnable for English speaking students’ is timely. However, as teachers, it is possible to implement strategies such as scaffolding to support children’s learning. Scaffolding gained notoriety with the work of Vygotsky in child development, child psychology and socio-cultural theory (Holzman, 2008; Reiber and Robinson, 2013). Berk and Winsler (1995) drew on this approach to suggest that scaffolding of children’s learning was essentially building on what children already

know, introducing new learning in small steps, and pacing of lessons to suit children's development and understanding. Read (2008, p. 6) puts forward that:

Scaffolding is a well-known metaphor widely used in education and language teaching to describe the guidance, collaboration and support provided by teachers to lead children to new learning...scaffolding is a temporary construct which can be put up, taken down, reinforced and strengthened, or dismantled piece by piece once it is no longer needed, and as children develop language and skills which enable them to act in an increasingly competent, confident and independent way (Read, 2008, p. 6)

By using the L1/L2 transfer and scaffolding strategies, teachers can encourage students to compare the two languages by looking for the differences and similarities between them as well as the sociocultural contexts they represent. If children's learning is supported by drawing on prior understanding, well scaffolded lessons in L1 with emphasis on L1/L2 transfer, then this combined approach has potential for making Chinese language learnable.

2.2.2.3 Interdependence across languages

Cummins (2008, p.67) argues that "there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency that is common across languages" and as such teachers of Chinese to English speaking students, are able to find these common points across the two languages and incorporate these through teaching activities. Not only is the cognitive

and academic proficiency common across languages, but there are also words which are common.

Loan words (Haspelmath and Tadmor, 2009) are another cross-language similarity present across many languages. Haspelmath and Tadmor (2009) developed a handbook which outlines many of the world's loan words across various languages. Similarly in terms of pronunciation, there are words in Chinese and English which are pronounced similarly but may have different meanings. Although there are many aspects such as similar sounds in pronunciation between two languages, many loan words are phonetically borrowed. For instance, Coffee is pronounced as 'kā fēi' in Chinese, Sofa is 'shā fā', and Cola is 'kě lè'. These words did not even exist in Chinese until interactions with English culture provided a need for these loan words, and hence unsurprisingly the meanings in Chinese and English are identical. There are many examples of loan words from English. Other words are phonetically the same but have entirely different meanings, in which these examples are generally coincidental.

2.3 Social networking sites as virtual learning communities

As this research is technology-associated, technology-relevant literature has been explored and reviewed. The Internet has become a very popular and accessible tool in the 21st century – one which has received mixed reactions. Many people hold positive attitudes toward Information Technology (IT) as it has provided convenience and opportunities for communication. Its reach has stretched throughout most countries in the world and our life today seems almost unsustainable without the support of Information Technology.

2.3.1 Social and educational contexts of IT

In recent years, language education has shifted from a teacher-centred and instruction-based approach to one that is student-centred and task-based (Cabral, 2010). Students are required to engage in prepared authentic situations of communication, where they have to acquire and develop a number of language competences and skills within specified levels of proficiency (Guerra, 2013). Simultaneously Information Technology has entered people's lives, and influenced many social activities. Desjardins and Peters (2007, p. 3) report the influence of IT on language teaching: "the repercussions touch our lives in our home, our workplace, our schools, even in our leisure activities. Language teaching has evolved in concert."

Survey research shows that the use of technology by people under 20 years is for a combination of purposes such as to "communicate with friends through instant messaging, download music, hangout on Facebook, surf the Web, and meet friends online" (Solomon and Schrun, 2007, p. 26). In addition they have started to use the Internet for searching or organising learning activities. According to an American survey cited by Solomon and Schrun (2007),

Students 'are setting trends with their use of technology both in school and out of school'; 'communication is a key motivator for students and drives their use of technology for learning and for personal use'; and they are 'strong believers in the power of technology to enrich their learning experiences' (Solomon and Schrun, 2007, p.45).

When it comes to IT today, students no longer feel disenfranchised. It has become common to receive the latest information online and it is also a quick and easy way to stay connected with others. As early as 2001, Prensky concluded that there were digital natives (those who grew up with IT), and digital immigrants (those in a group that grew up pre-the internet. Prensky contends that:

Students today are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach; they represent the first generation to grow up surrounded by technology; they think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors; and our students today are all native speakers of the digital languages of computers, video games and the Internet (Prensky, 2001, p.1).

Although Prensky's research was with young adults, the same observations appear to hold true for today's younger children.

Recent researchers also demonstrate that some teachers "feel their status is threatened because they find themselves in a situation where the pupil is more skilled and knowledgeable [with IT] than they are" (Morris, 2010, p.144). This reality can also be found in cases of other teaching and learning activities (refer to Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3). Solomon and Schrun (2007, p.31) state that "today students know that they are tech-savvy and report that their schools are not. Schools are still more text-dominated and do not integrate technology with students learning effectively."

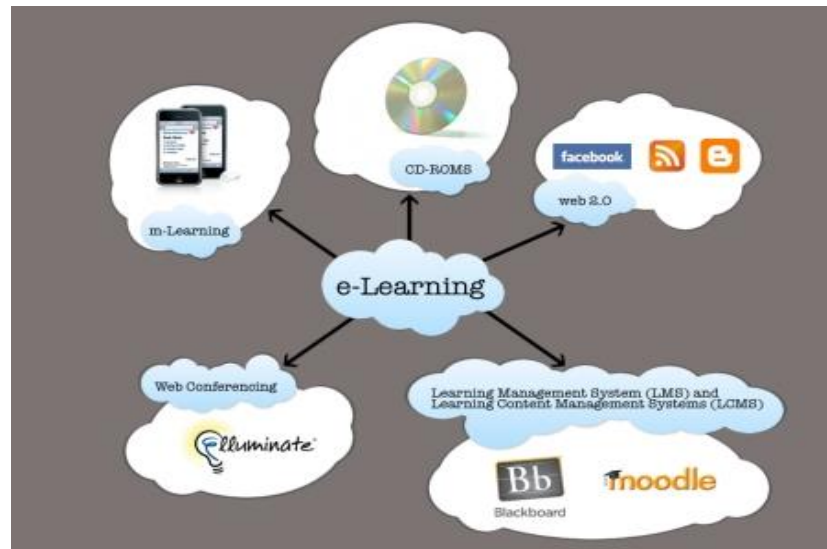


Figure 2.2: E-learning, GSMA and MasterCard Foundation Release Report on M-Learning

Source: (<http://www.mobl21.com/blog/tag/mobile-technology/>)



Figure 2.3: A few iPad App's for CBL (Communication Based Learning)

Source: (<http://teachwithtech.global2.vic.edu.au/2012/07/23/ipad-apps-for-cbl/>)

2.3.2 The growth and popularity of social networking

Social networking websites are virtual communities which allow people to connect and interact with others on a particular subject or to just ‘hang out’ together online (Murray and Waller, 2007). Membership of online social networks have exploded at an exponential rate (refer to Figure 4). The popularity of the social networking phenomenon is notably demonstrated by the large number of users participating on a daily basis. It is also measured by the amount of interactions per user taking place on the network. Perhaps, it is more appropriate to consider the use of online social networks as collective social action (Cheung, Chiu and Lee, 2010). Due to the reason that this ‘online community’ is quite new, there accordingly exists very little theory-driven empirical research on intentional social actions within online social networks (Cheung, Chiu and Lee, 2010, p. 30).

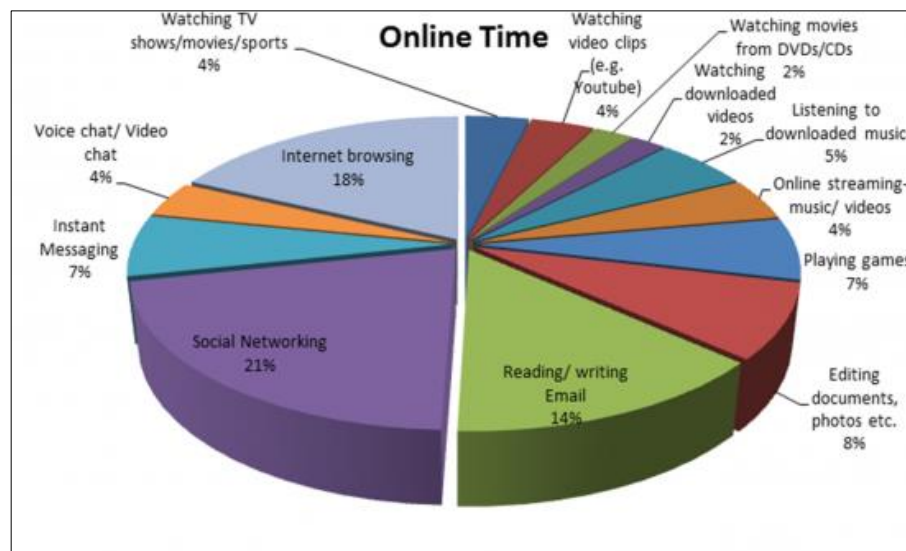


Figure 2.4: A 2013 Social Media Report

Source: Sakki, 2013 (<http://optimiseblog.co.uk/a-2013-social-media-report/>)

2.3.2.1 Young people's use of social media

As shown in Figure 2.4 above, the main purpose for Internet users spending time online is social networking. Other more specific uses such as watching video clips (e.g. YouTube) can also be itemised as social networking use, given that YouTube is also a social networking website for generating and commenting on videos. The popularity of online social networks has created a new world for collaborative and communicative learning. More than a billion individuals around the world are connected and networked together (Cheung and Lee, 2010). In this context young people can access information (languages, cultures and ideas) by simply clicking the button on 'search'. There are opportunities in the educational sphere afforded by these findings.

2.3.3 The pedagogical support from Web 2.0

Web 2.0 technology, is also a form of social media including wikis, social networking and social book marketing, and is constructed in such a way that it can be co-opted to support collaborative learning (Ajjan and Hartshorne, 2008). Web 2.0 technology is well suited to collective knowledge building, knowledge management, social networking and social interaction, which means that both participants and teachers have the opportunity to become more active and positively involved in learning (Ajjan and Hartshorne, 2008).

Three propositions from previous studies concerning Web 2.0 indicate it can support collaborative learning and reflection:

1. Web 2.0 provides support for students' to record their responses to ideas and debates. Maloney (2007) has indicated that is also important to add reflections about emotions, since these can have a significant impact on how an individual handles a situation.
2. Hartshorne and Ajjan (2009) and Maloney (2007) purport that Web 2.0 can be harnessed to enhance identification and collaboration between students.
3. If it is true that Web 2.0 supports students' reflections on their own thoughts and emotions, and that it strengthens identification and collaboration between students, this should have consequences for students' self-awareness, justifying the construction of a third and final proposition: Web 2.0 supports the development of students' self-awareness in demarcated contexts, for example when they collaborate towards specific goals (Augustsson, 2010, p. 197).

Compared with Web 1.0, Web 2.0 is a significant step into the area of education. Web 1.0 was more a process of one-directional teaching and learning, similar to the traditional teacher-centred classroom setting, as it is based on didactic teaching and information transmission. On the contrary, Web 2.0 provides a wider and more interactive teaching and learning environment. The major features of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 are represented below in Figure 2.5.

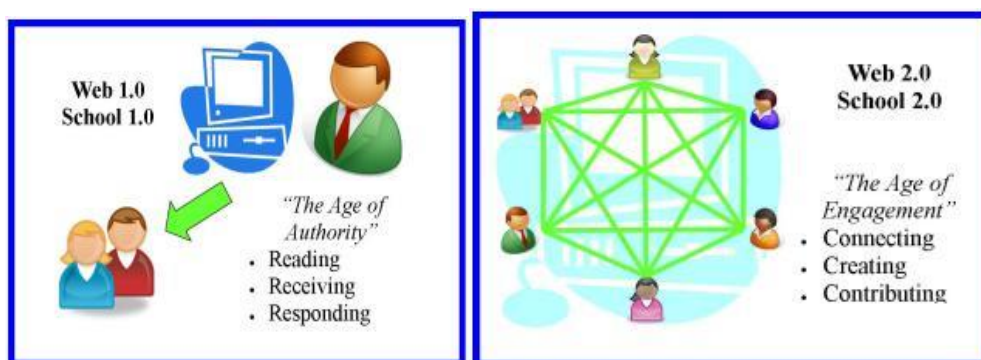


Figure 2.5: Comparison between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 in Education

Source: (<http://www.classroom20.com/page/649749:Page:56194>)

Comparing the two images shown above, the compelling advantage of Web 2.0 as a pedagogical mode is its possibilities for engagement, connectedness, creativity and contributions. During Web 2.0 study programs, interactions among students are able to be more frequent with consequently, more questions and ideas being proposed and shared. Web 2.0 is beneficial for creating a more positive and encouraging learning environment (Maloney, 2007).

2.4 Social networking and language learning with young children

In conducting this literature review, most studies have been conducted with students in higher education or where social networking was implemented in subjects other than Chinese language teaching. One study with younger children was the study by Masters and Barr (2010) that followed children in the age groups of 6-8 years and 9-12 years and their use of online environments. Their findings reported that both groups of pre-teens participated in an online environment with confidence and competency environment (p. 304). With this literature gap in mind, this research ventured to combine language teaching with social networking for Australian students. The reality is that social networking is popular among young students and

using social media as a way to present communication in a targeted L2 (in this case Chinese) could induce a new and potentially positive response from students to foreign language learning.

2.4.1 Blogs

There are many types of social networking that young children can navigate. For instance, a study by Izham (2008) reports that blogs provide a platform for students to participate positively in the learning process; in this study students shared and produced quality creative writing pieces on their blogs. Supyan, Norizan and Dalia (2010) state that the use of blogs had the effect of reducing writing difficulties among the students who participated. Similarly Amir, Ismail and Hussin (2010) found that allowing students to communicate through blogs supported their learning in terms of ideas, grammar, writing style, and the structure and organization of the articles they shared online.

These examples illustrate how one form of learning language through a common social networking form – blogging – had significant impact on students learning English. In these studies blogging helped students to improve their writing skills.

It might be that other modes of language learning (listening and speaking) could also be supported by social networking methods, for example, by implementing sessions using YouTube and/or SoundCloud. In addition children's reading could be enhanced by introducing them to scaffolded activities which could access informative social networking sites such as Tumblr, and Facebook. These sites have increased potential

for motivating students as they generally contain the latest information on buzzwords and trendy phrases.

Continuing this theme, a virtual classroom might be built through the platform of Edmodo. The actual studying barriers of time and space in a traditional classroom could potentially be eliminated, as Edmodo could be one method of social networking where Chinese language learning could be the focus for a continuous learning environment keeping students and the teacher-researcher connected.

2.5 Social learning platform – Edmodo

Edmodo is a very popular social network learning website for teachers, students and parents. Generally, it is regarded as the educational version of Facebook. As a virtual classroom, Edmodo can incorporate nearly all the classroom teaching and learning activities onto one online learning platform. Edmodo can provide opportunities for student participation in discussions, assignments, reading, writing and listening. It can be used as a positive and encouraging environment for language learning.

MacArthur (2009) recognises that Web 2.0 is a place where students can practice communication skills with authentic audiences, but reminds the reader that there are privacy and security concerns raised when students use these technologies. In this regard Farber et al. (2012) counsel that problems may arise with inappropriate preferences children have for internet use, while Gamble, et al, (2014) warn that children's sleep patterns may be disturbed through overuse of technology. However, with the teacher's participation Edmodo could provide a training ground for safe Internet behaviour (Holland and Muilenburg, 2011).

Rather than use as recreational social networking, Edmodo activities can be designed by teachers with a view to educational improvement for students. When a learning group is established, teachers can invite students to join and participate in learning activities. Teachers, then take on a guiding role which includes monitoring the information that students post and also providing feedback to support student's learning. By juxtaposing the informal nature of writing on the internet with formal assignments given by a teacher through this Internet site, students learn to think critically about the purpose of their communication. As a result, students will manage to practice important Internet and also self-study skills in a secure, adult-moderated environment (Holland and Muilenburg, 2011, p. 61).

Along with the learning scenarios listed above, educational social networking sites, like Edmodo also offers a unique opportunity to “connect with students and help them create norms and reflect on how different online actions will be interpreted” (Parker, 2012, p. 50). In addition to the main participants (teachers and students), parents can also take part in this online networking space. For instance, parents can be abreast of their children's learning as they can see their child's posts and the parents themselves can make a contribution by posting comments as feedback. It is also conducive to cultivating a sense of collaboration for students as they encounter many chances for group work. Educators can find creative ways to support student's learning by using Edmodo as a platform to post and critique one another's literature analysis, collaborate with their peers, and post creative writing for an audience.

Edmodo as an online platform has similar functions to Facebook, which can be easily navigated by students, many of whom are already Facebook users. Edmodo is also a very popular and widely used educational social network website. The map of the

world below (Figure 2.6) identifies the number of Edmodo users from different countries around the world. Although the source is from 2011, the indication is that hundreds of thousands of users are familiar with Edmodo worldwide.

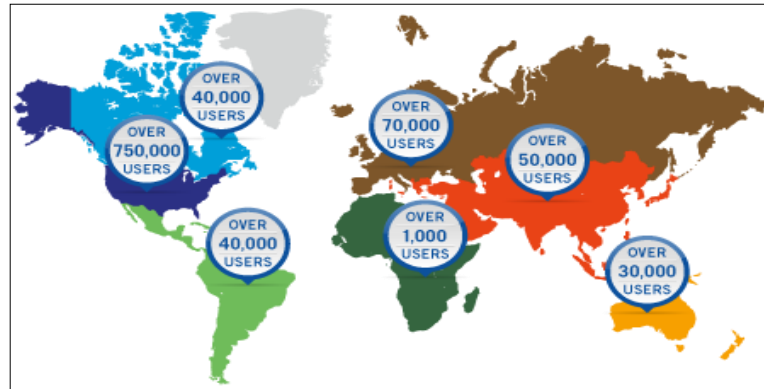


Figure 2.6: Users of Edmodo in the World (Edmodo, 2011)

Source: (<https://blog.edmodo.com/2011/01/14/instant-collaboration-with-teacher/>)

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature reviewed has provided background information on second language learning in the Australian context along with the strategies of L1/L2 knowledge transfer, scaffolding and social networking as strategies to support second language learning. The following key points are presented as a summary of the preceding literature review.

1. Using language transfer strategy (L1/L2) to build up metalinguistic awareness can be beneficial for English speakers to learn Chinese as they are able to apply knowledge from their first language (English) to another language (Chinese) which makes second language learning more effective.

2. Scaffolding as a strategy to support children's learning was where teachers planned lessons that built on what children already knew, where new knowledge was introduced in small manageable steps, and lessons were paced to suit children's development and understanding (Read, 2008).

3. Social network websites provide rich experiences and opportunities for students to get connected with a variety of digital literacies such as images, texts, symbols, audios and videos which will allow them to become positive learners of Chinese language and culture.

4. The building of metalinguistic awareness can be facilitated by implementing social networking opportunities into the classroom and off-class. As metalinguistic awareness is also referred as the ability to reflect on the use of language (Kosić, 2010), that is beyond the meaning of simply seeing a language as written words and phrases, but a literacy skill in interpreting and manipulating linguistic knowledge across different forms of languages (print-based, visual, audio and multimedia). The rich and interactive learning resources provided on social networks can be harnessed to support students to learn a second language.

5. Language learning is an interactive and dynamic process (Cheung, Chiu and Lee, 2010). Edmodo has many outstanding features that may promote a positive learning environment for Chinese language. Students are both the learners and creators of information when using Edmodo. They can be driven by their curiosity for a new language and enthusiasm for technologies at the same time, creating favourable conditions for their learning. Research also shows the use of technologies such as the Internet and computers can help develop student's second language learning in terms of promoting reading and writing skills (Kanthawongs and Kanthawongs, 2013).

Combining the teaching strategies of L1/L2 transfer and scaffolding with the use of social networks may support student's learning of Chinese in a positive way. Teaching students to transfer their knowledge of first language – English, to their second language – Chinese enables them to build connections between the two languages. The use of educational social network website – Edmodo further influences their building of metalinguistic awareness through gaining knowledge and perspectives through a variety of language and literacy modes, which in turn may assist in their learning of second language – Chinese.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methods and methodology chosen as the most suitable to explore the research question: “How can social media (Edmodo in this case) best exert a supporting role in facilitating students’ Chinese language learning?” and the three contributory questions:

1. Is there a space within current Chinese language teaching and learning pedagogies to introduce Edmodo?
2. In what ways/strategies can Edmodo be used to supplement on-class teaching?
3. What activities can be implemented to support Chinese language learning through Edmodo?

Chapter 3 begins with an explanation of qualitative research methods in educational research and continues with the justification of this approach in this research. An explanation of case study as the study design follows with descriptions of the data collection tools and data analysis methods. The research principles triangulation, validity and reliability along with ethical considerations complete the chapter.

3.1 Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies

In educational research, qualitative methods are implemented when an understanding of a particular social context is the aim of the study. The researcher intends to use evidence from those who are participating in that particular context to gain insight and a comprehension of the situation under study (Yin, 2006). Research which is undertaken to ‘prove’ something and which gathers information by collecting data that is numerically based (for example, numbers of students, examination results, number of responses given) is labelled, quantitative research (Atkins and Wallace, 2012, p.21). Both have different methods and intentions. Qualitative research focuses on gaining an in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours. Qualitative research methodology is a form of naturalistic enquiry (Gonzales et al., 2008, p.3).

Quantitative research suits scientific research which requires numerical data and objective calculation to prove or disprove an hypothesis. Social and educational enquiry is a much more complicated field to study. It is multilayered, and not easily susceptible to the atomization process inherent in quantitative numerical research. It has to be studied in total rather than in fragments if a true understanding of the complex situation is to be reached (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.219). The comparison between the two methodologies is represented in Figure 7.1 below.

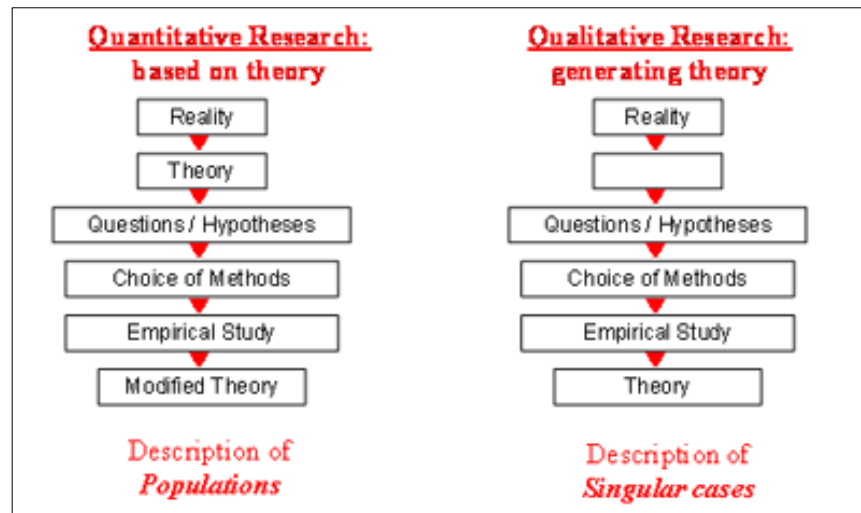


Figure 3.1: Description of quantitative and qualitative research

Source: Spatscheck, 2009 (<http://www.sozialraum.de/the-socio-spatial-paradigm-in-social-work.php>)

3.1.1 Implications for this research

This research delves into the effects of Information Technology as a useful tool to support language teaching. Conventional second language teaching methods such as textbooks, grammar and teacher-centred lessons leave students disengaged. For instance, according to the Oxford Dictionary Online (2013) there were nearly 1000 new words and phrases created around the world each year with at least three new words being invented each day. With the speed and pervasiveness of the Internet students of languages can be updated each day across the major social networking sites – first-hand information can be distributed and received in real time. It can be regarded as a valuable opportunity for language teaching and learning.

This research aims to investigate whether Edmodo can exert a supportive role in young students learning of the Chinese language. It will be undertaken in a social and educational environment with human participants. The research question will be

explored in order to understand the outcomes for students and the teacher-researcher. Under these circumstances this research will employ a qualitative methodology where “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, p.121; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013, p.538) will be sought. These descriptions require inclusion not only of detailed observational data but data on meanings, participants’ interactions of situations and attempting to include unobserved factors (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013). A very small (minor) component of quantitative data is included in the guise of gathering student responses to a questionnaire.

3.2 Research design

As explained above qualitative methodology will be employed to undertake this research. The subsequent section turns to a discussion of the research design justifying how the research will play out in the research setting.

3.2.1. Case Study

A case study is a specific instance that often exemplifies a more general principle however no generalizability is automatic (Nisbet and Watt, 1984, p.72). Further it has been described as “the study of an instance in action” (Adelman et al., 1980, p.46). Stake (1995, p.5) describes this as an indepth study of “a particular” – a specific and unique setting.

Whilst Creswell (1994, p.12) defines case study as a single instance of a bounded system, such as a child, a clique, a class, a school, a community, others would not hold to such a tight definition. For example, Yin (2009, p.18) argues that the

boundary line between the phenomenon and its context is blurred, as a case study is a study of a case in a context and it is important to set the case within its context (that is, rich descriptions and details are often a feature of a case study). A case study can be both: sometimes tightly bounded and other times less so. As Creswell (1994) argues, the boundaries of the case can often be ambiguous.

Choosing case study as a research methodology can enable readers to understand ideas and abstract theories put forward by the author as they have been generated by providing examples of real participants in real circumstances (see again Figure 3.1). A case study can document situations in multiple ways to gain the best understanding of the social context under study (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

As mentioned above, it is recognisable that there are many variables or uncertain factors influencing a single case. In order to apprehend the connotations hidden under those variables, it usually requires more than one method to collect data to enrich the evidentiary sources of the research. In this regard, case studies can combine both numerical and qualitative data, and altogether putting up a representative example of blended methods research. Case studies can explain, describe, illustrate and enlighten (Yin, 2009, p.19). An advantage of a case study is that it can attempt to understand cause and effect in real circumstances.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.296) outline several types of case studies in qualitative research including: Illustrative (primarily descriptive), Exploratory (a smaller pilot case study to scope a larger study), Cumulative case studies (as part of a series of case studies) and Critical instance case studies (generated to answer cause and effect questions). This research is an illustrative case study as it describes the

educational context for young beginning learners of Chinese being introduced to new vocabulary and cultural activities in-class as well as off-class through the online platform of Edmodo.

3.3 Data collection

The following section outlines the key data collection tools implemented in this case study. These include interviews, observations, the teacher-researcher's reflective journals and a questionnaire.

Qualitative data is often collected with small numbers of people yet the data tend to be detailed and rich (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013). Consequently, when planning to collect data, quality rather than quantity of data will be the focus. Collecting a large amount of data can often interfere with more specific data which would more closely link to the purpose of research.

3.3.1 Interview

As a widely used method for data collection, interviews play a significant role in gathering useful information from participants. Kvale (1996) remarks, a conversation, or *inter-view*, is an interchange of *views* between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. Interviews can be conducted to gauge the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and need to account for and emphasise the social situatedness of evidence collected. A skilled interviewer must build a rapport with the interviewees in order to tease out their opinions and ideas. Patton

(1980, p.258) suggests that he “donned masks in order to remove the masks of those I wanted to observe and interview.”

Interviews may be conducted individually or with groups of participants (focus groups). Generally, focus group interviews allow the researcher to explore group norms and dynamics around the issues and topics under investigation. They can reflect how people respond to each other's views and compared to an individual interview, can provide a fuller understanding of the issues under investigation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013). Individual interviews allow researchers to interact directly with the respondents as well as provide opportunities for the clarification of responses, for immediate follow-up questions and probing of responses. Researchers can also observe non-verbal responses during the interview which may carry more information to supplement the data collected. Also, asking open-ended questions in the interview can help to get more information from the respondents in order to avoid close-ended answers.

The research interview has been defined as “a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him [or her] on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation” (Cannell and Kahn, 1968, p.79). In contrast to an ordinary everyday conversation, an interview has its specific task-oriented features. Usually, interviewers will prompt the interviewee for detailed responses to drill down random answers. Skilled interviewers are also aware that their biases towards answers that may agree with their perspectives, need to be acknowledged and all viewpoints offered in interviews accepted as credible data.

3.3.1.1 Interview strategy in this research

In this research, individual semi-structured interviews were used with classroom teachers. Their familiarity with every student in the classroom can provide precise, accurate and valuable information for the research. The interview questions were designed to focus on students' performances and engagements from the perspective of classroom teachers. These including their reflection and evaluation of the lesson content and teaching strategies used by the teacher-researcher as well as recommendations for teaching improvements. These interviews were an opportunity for informal and semi-structured conversations with the general classroom language teachers. The interview questions to be used as prompts are listed in Table 3.1. The teacher-researcher used these to guide the interviews but allowed the flow of conversations to emerge.

Table 3.1: Interview design sample

Interview Questions	Focused Aspect
Has your class been involved in Chinese language lessons before? Did the students like it?	Student's interests in Chinese program
Can the students say some Chinese words, phrases or short sentences?	Acquired knowledge of Chinese/Existing knowledge
What do you think of the time length of each Chinese class?	Classroom engagement
Is the Internet accessible to students when they are at school? Do they like using social media?	IT accessibility and interest for technologies
To what extent can teachers help students with their self-study?	Teacher's teaching strategies
What are your experiences of creating a positive learning environment for students?	Past lessons and experiences
Open-ended question: Do you have anything to add?	For acquiring more potential information

3.3.2 Observation

Observation is another widely used method for collecting data in a qualitative study. It is more than just looking. It is systematically observing people, events, behaviours, settings, artefacts and routines (Simpson and Tuson, 2003, p.2). Observations allow researchers to collect *on-the-spot* data thoroughly from every angle of the practice under investigation.

Observational data is sensitive to contexts and demonstrates strong ecological validity (Moyles, 2002). This enables investigators to capture some valuable information which may not be highlighted in interviews due to awkwardness especially if in a group interview.

Keen observations can add unexpected layers of data. For example, non-verbal behaviour that is obvious, can be noted through observations but will not be recorded on an audio tape of an interview (Bailey, 1994).

3.3.2.1 Observation strategy in this research

The aim of incorporating observations in this case study was to focus on students' online interactions and learning activities in order to understand and know more about different students' characteristics, interests, strengths and learning dispositions during and after the Chinese language lessons.

3.3.3 Reflective Journal

Reflective journals can provide researchers with the opportunity to keep a record of narrative accounts of their professional reflections in practice (Mertler, 2009).

Reflections on an event can provide useful data in gaining an understanding of the context under study. Researchers are cautioned that subjectivities will be foremost in these data and analysis should take account of this possible biased data (Efron and Ravid, 2013).

3.3.3.1 Reflective journal strategy in this research

In addition to interview and observation, reflective journals were also used as a data collection method in this research. Having a major role in the Chinese class, it can be very challenging for the teacher-researcher to record the students' actions, reactions and learning while teaching, thus reflective journals can be used as an additional record of the class. Key recollections, details and assessments of every class, were recorded with the goal of developing an understanding of students' learning in Chinese class, in order to support them further and to improve teaching strategies. In this research, the reflective journals included the observations of students' performances and reactions in Chinese class; the researcher's personal thoughts and ideas of the class; some comparisons and analysis of expected lesson outcomes and actual results; and researcher's reflections on the daily teaching in a summative manner. The data collection strategies are presented diagrammatically in Figure 3.2.

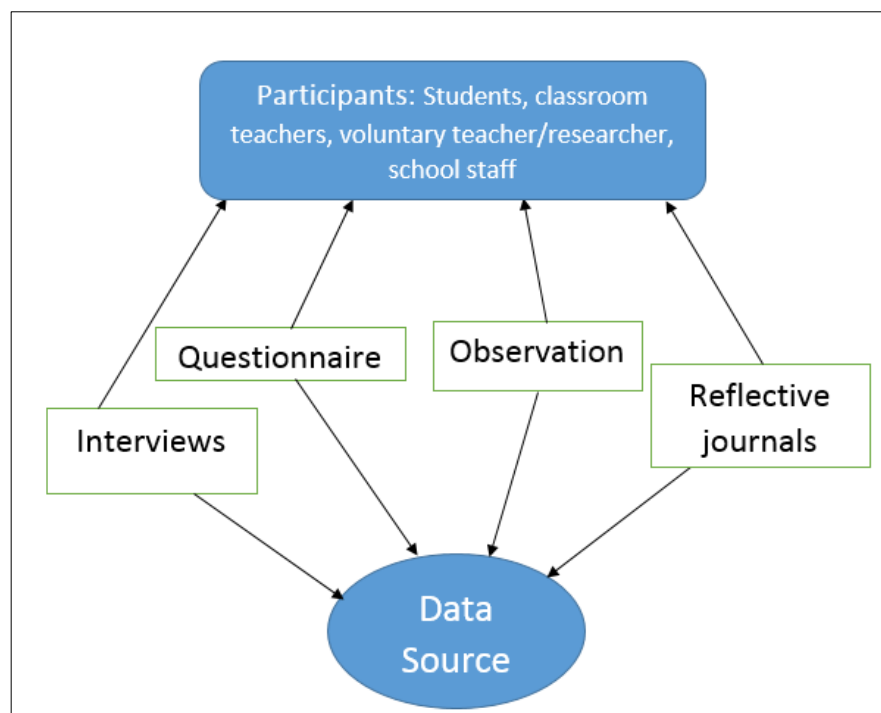


Figure 3.2: Data collection methods

3.3.4 Questionnaire

Questionnaires can be designed to contain either structured questions with blanks to fill in, multiple choice questions, or they can contain open-ended questions where the respondent is encouraged to reply at length and choose their own focus and direction for their answers (Moyles, 2002; Oppenheim 1992).

3.3.4.1 Questionnaire strategy in this research

In this research multiple choice questions were used in the questionnaire design in order to reduce student's time pressure to complete the form. Additionally a blank space was incorporated at the left of each question to enable students to contribute any comments or suggestions they may like to make. The questions focused on discovering students' interests/lack of interest in learning Chinese throughout the

teaching terms when Edmodo had been introduced. Data via questionnaires were collected from students periodically before or after class.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is the systematic process of generating interpretation, ideas and understands from the data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013, p.537). The methods to analyse the data collected in this research are described below.

3.4.1 Qualitative data analysis

Data analysis initially begins with reducing, consolidating and organising evidence that provides answers to the research questions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013). In this research, the collected data from interviews, questionnaires, observations and reflective journals were analysed and interpreted through two data analysis methods: coding and quantitative analysis.

Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data – making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013; Gibbs, 2008). The analysis and presentation of 'useful' data related to the research questions is the aim. Coding data and collecting those data related to the same theme is the initial stage of the data analysis. Once themes begin to emerge from the coeed data the researcher is able to summarise, categorise and synthesise the information around the themes as they relate to the research questions. Coding the data (and attaching a label to it) enables the identification of that which is relevant, by systematically reducing the raw data into smaller more meaningful units. Coding is a

significant procedure for identifying the evidence needed to develop ideas and concepts.

3.4.2 Quantitative data analysis

As qualitative data can be very rich researchers will need to select and present the data according to the purposes of the research. As data are analysed it may be unavoidable that some personal prejudices or biases guide the researcher as he/she chooses 'relevant' data for coding (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014). Therefore a small amount of quantitative analysis was also used in this research to accurately demonstrate the research results of raw data from student questionnaires and teacher interviews. The use of percentage and raw scores presented in table formats was used to generate and display observable findings from data analysis. Quantitative analysis can enhance the reliability and credibility of case study (Atkins and Wallace, 2012; Mertler, 2009).

3.5 Triangulation

Triangulation is a method that has been widely used in research in order to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon and thereby adding to the validity and reliability of the data gathered (Winter, 2000). Triangulation requires at least three different methods of collecting data relating to the same case (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013, p.195). Denzie (1989) took the notion of triangulation beyond just data collection to include four areas where triangulation could improve the quality of any research. These four relate to the use of:

- multiple methods,
- multiple sources of data,
- multiple investigators, and
- multiple theories to justify the findings.

In this research, the first two forms of triangulation were implemented. These were multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of data collection. The methods of data collected were by interviews, observations, reflective journals and a questionnaire. Secondly the multiple sources of data were triangulated from students, the classroom teacher and the teacher-researcher. In this way triangulation offered attempts to address data validity and reliability; both issues will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

3.6 Validity and reliability

3.6.1 Validity

Validity is an important process to justify effective research, so that it can be considered worthwhile. Validity is thus a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013).

With respect to qualitative research, validity of the findings would be based on a study conducted with sincere, far-reaching, abundant descriptions and analyses. Attempts to reduce researcher bias also add to validity of the research. Due to the differences in quantitative research and qualitative research, validity in the former is addressed as the data is subjected to cautious sampling in the collection stage and

analysis using formulas and statistics. Validity in the later is more likely to be acknowledged through a deep and rich description of the data listed.

There is some debate around qualitative research that strives for validity above attention to the qualities of that methodology itself. Maxwell (1992) argues that qualitative researchers need to be cautious not to be working within the agenda of the positivists in arguing for the need for research to demonstrate concurrent, predictive, convergent, criterion-related, internal and external validity. Maxwell, echoing Mishler (1990), suggests that ‘understanding’ is a more suitable term than ‘validity’ in qualitative research.

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability is essentially a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents (Lincoln and Guba, 1994). Further it is suggested that the concept of reliability is largely from the positivist research paradigm and it is not the case that qualitative research either guarantees reliability or sees it as irrelevant (Brock-Utne, 1996, p.613).

In qualitative research reliability can be regarded as a fit between what the researcher records as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched. According to this, reliability can be summarised as the degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage maintained in a research project (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

3.7 Ethical considerations

In conducting qualitative research, an ethical approach should be adopted at all times throughout the study. Ethical research covers far more than receiving permission from participants, ensuring they know what the project is about.

Critical questions can guide a researcher when undertaking studies in social and educational environments with human participants. These include:

- Is data collection open and honest and do participants know what is expected of them?
- Are observations being recorded faithfully and morally?
- Is respect to others paramount while conducting a case study?
- Has data analysis been conducted truthfully and honestly?
- Are there processes in place to deal with unexpected ethical issues should they occur?

Wellington (2000) argues that all educational research should be ‘ETHICAL’, using capitalisation to emphasise its significance. This is not only because we demand ethical approaches in educational settings (and particularly when including young people), but also for those taking on the role of teacher and researcher. The five principles underpinning educational research identified by the British Educational Research Association (2011, p.4) are as follows:

All educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for:

- *The person*

- *Knowledge*
- *Democratic values*
- *The quality of educational research*
- *Academic freedom*

Three points need to be exemplified while doing a qualitative research. First, researchers need to build rapport with participants. After observing and interviewing, researchers might gradually change their relationships with participants from formal to casual ones. Through such interactions,

3.7.1 Ethical clearance

This research met the ethical standards required by the University of Western Sydney being allocated approval number H10501 (Appendix 1). Similarly ethical clearance was requested from the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) to conduct this research in a local public school. After review the DEC approved this research and allocated an ethics approval number 20141131 (Appendix 2)

As the research unfolded the timeline for all research components was completed to match the degree program and the yearly calendar of the participating school. This schedule is listed in Appendix 3.

Essential to ethical research processes is to ensure the participants have a clear understanding of the purposes of the research and what is required of them should they participate. As this research drew on the data generated from ‘normal’ classroom Chinese language lessons, all the parents consented for their children’s

data to be used in the research. A copy of both the Information Sheet and Consent Form is included as Appendix 4 and 5.

3.7.2 Ensuring anonymity

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality are important ethical issues to safeguard all involved in the research. In this research, the names of school and participants have been anonymised in order to ensure confidentiality. Throughout this thesis the participating school is referred to as BR Public School.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the approach implemented by the teacher-researcher in undertaking this research. Choosing a qualitative methodology enacted through a case study research design proved the most suitable in terms of exploring the main and contributory research questions. The research saw triangulation of data collection and data sources, with the teacher-researcher conducting the project with due diligence to validity, reliability and ethical issues.

The thesis now continues with Chapter 4, which is the first of the evidentiary chapters executing the above methodology.

CHAPTER 4

REFLECTIONS ON EARLY STAGE CHINESE TEACHING CLASSES

This chapter is the first of the evidentiary chapters to explore the research question: *“How can social media (Edmodo in this case) best exert a supporting role in facilitating students’ Chinese language learning?”* by addressing the first contributory question, *“Is there a space within current Chinese language teaching and learning pedagogies to introduce Edmodo?”*

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, evidence from early stage classroom teaching activities are presented and analysed. To investigate whether there is a space in current Chinese language teaching pedagogies to introduce Edmodo in a supporting role, it was decided not to use this application in the early teaching stages. Therefore this chapter focuses on students’ reactions and outcomes with traditional classroom teaching.

The chapter begins with the class setting and context, followed by the methods of data collection and analysis. Research instruments included classroom observations,

commentaries from the teacher-researcher's reflective journals and questionnaires. The many challenges encountered during these early stage teaching experiences are highlighted in detail. The causes of these problems have been proposed with subsequent findings that new strategies appear to be necessary as a way forward to increase successful Chinese language teaching and learning.

4.2 Background

4.2.1 The ROSETE program

This research was undertaken whilst the teacher-researcher was a participant in the Research Oriented, School Engaged, Teacher Education (ROSETE) program which operates through the Western Sydney University (WSU) in partnership with the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (DEC) and the Ningbo Education Bureau in China. Students who are part of the ROSETE program study for a Master of Research (Honours) degree at WSU while at the same time teaching Chinese language to public school students in Western Sydney local public schools. The ROSETE students are trained to be researchers of their own teaching practice.

4.2.2 Preparation at Western Sydney University

Before placements began in local public schools an informal conference was held at the WSU where previous students provided background information and shared their valuable experiences as teacher-researchers in the ROSETE program. From this came an image of Australian public schools, expressed with the key words:

flexibility, diversity and inclusivity. On the contrary, a typical Chinese classroom is quite different: textbook-based, exam-oriented and teacher-centred.

A workshop as part of the preparation for the upcoming teaching assignment, was also facilitated at WSU with the aim of showcasing the differences between Chinese and Australian cultures and customs in areas such as social values, local traditions, festivals, and daily activities. The major notable differences between Chinese and Australian classrooms were again highlighted.

Based on the University program experiences, it was clear that teaching in Australian schools needed to differ from that in China in the following ways: encourage students to talk more, make classes more interesting, use fewer textbooks and find teaching materials that are more flexible.

4.2.3 The school placement and teaching assignment

After this initial training at WSU, the entire ROSETE cohort was assigned to teach Chinese language in different public schools across the western Sydney region. In this instance my placement was at a comparatively large public primary school, with approximately 50 staff, including teachers, administration and ancillary staff and 500 students. The teacher/student ration was 1:25 in most classrooms. This school was one that had been participating in the ROSETE program for nearly six years. Normally the volunteer Chinese teacher-researcher would teach Chinese language in the DEC schools for a total of eighteen months. In the first half year, the teacher-researcher would deliver the lessons alone (with the classroom teacher's supervision) for half a year, followed by another six months of teaching with a previous volunteer teacher-researcher, and in the final half year, partner with a new incoming volunteer.

Since the students in this primary school had already been engaged in some Chinese language lessons, it was assumed they had a basic foundation in speaking Chinese and had been exposed to some Chinese cultural experiences and events. Therefore before visiting this school, certain matters were decided in advance, such as how to gauge students' previous Chinese learning, and how to use this knowledge to prepare lessons effectively and efficiently.

4.2.4 The Australian classroom

After being allocated a placement, the first task was one month of classroom observations of Chinese language lessons being taught by the current Chinese teacher. The goals were to become familiar with the Australian public school system and the characteristics of Australian students.

4.2.4.1 The classroom environment

The first lessons observed were Mathematics and English classes. The classroom had students' worksheets and drawings on the walls, world knowledge (maps and encyclopaedia excerpts) was visible everywhere; desks and chairs were randomly placed; a large smart board was at the front of the classroom; colour pens, comic books, handicrafts, and games and toys were placed into each student's storage space. The whole classroom displayed an image of a positive, diverse, engaging, encouraging and student-centred learning environment.

4.2.4.2 The students

The following features were observed in this Australian classroom:

1. Students were highly enthusiastic about new things and displayed a willingness to investigate.
2. Students liked to raise questions in class.
3. Most students were not timid or shy about giving a wrong answer.
4. Students enjoyed the use of technology, such as computer-aided learning and various digital studying devices.
5. Students were stimulated to actively seek compliments or rewards.

Students who were not sure of their answer to a question still put up their hands to attract the teacher's attention. This is uncommon among Chinese students, who prefer to think twice, to feel sure they are correct, before raising their hands. Australian students were also allowed to sit in whatever way was most comfortable. They moved around the class, sitting on the floor, and writing down their thoughts on the white board freely at any time. Below is an excerpt from the teacher-researcher's early reflective journal account of the casual nature of the classroom organization compared to those in China.

When Ms Zhou was still writing the Chinese character '龍'/long/ which means dragon in English, everyone was sitting on the floor watching carefully at her and the character. One boy suddenly stood up and ran to his closet. I saw him grab a mini writing board and a pen, went back to his place, sat down, started copying the character from Ms Zhou. After he finished, I found he also drew a cartoon dragon on the side. The outline of the dragon looked quite similar as the character he just wrote down (Reflective Journal: September 4, 2013, p.3).

Through these observations it became clear that the essential aim of education is not simply explaining knowledge to students, rather the approach was to encourage students to find the truth or knowledge by themselves.

4.2.4.3 Classroom pedagogies

As the above excerpt indicates, creative classroom pedagogies and management were observed. Thus creativity should actually be emphasised in teaching Australian students. On one hand, due to the complexity of different student's situations and characteristics (backgrounds, language competency, home), various pedagogies should apply according to individual needs. On the other, it is difficult for a teacher to explore suitable study modes for every individual student; however it is possible to encourage students' motivation to enhance their overall study skills. For Chinese students, taking instructions and doing exactly as the teacher says is one of the most common learning behaviours. Students are taught there is 'only one answer to the question', thus they become more and more reluctant to question or delve further into information, often losing interest. In this respect, the Australian classroom teacher's classroom pedagogies were inspirational.

It was observed in this case study that Australian school teachers focus on students' self-exploration, and are concerned with each student's reactions and performances in class. When delivering a lesson, they slowly bring students into the learning environment relevant to the content by arousing students' interests. Teachers enjoy their interactions with students, with student participation enhanced through question and answer sessions. In addition, it was also observed that there were no textbooks being used with the children. Teachers had the freedom to prepare different subject

lessons according to the curriculum set by Education Department so various content and methods could be used in order to meet those requirements and standards for Australian students. This feature gives way to many opportunities for flexible pedagogies.

Technology was observed as an indispensable part of classroom teaching across many subject areas. The teacher used digital devices ranging from a smart board and computer programs, to music, videos and educational websites. Students become excited and focused when it came time to watch videos or browse web-pages.

4.3 Emerging issues and questions

4.3.1 Lesson planning and delivery

At the end of the observation period with the previous Chinese volunteer teacher, the actual classroom teaching began. In the first term the assignment was to teach Chinese language to Stage 3 students (Year 5 and 6, aged 9-11years). Most had already experienced some Chinese classes from the previous ROSETE teacher-researcher. The students began by greeting this teacher-researcher in basic Chinese, saying ‘你好’ (hello) ‘Wo Jiao...’ (my name is ...). That was a good sign since they appeared to have formed some impressions of Chinese and Chinese culture. They were then tested to see how many Chinese words they could recall, but the results were disappointing – those words were the only Chinese they remembered.

This prompted the questions: Why aren’t students remembering the Chinese words already taught? In what way were they taught Chinese before? These questions were

critical as the outcome of student's Chinese learning would be the result of many factors such as a Chinese teacher's pedagogy, student's way of understanding the target knowledge as well as language learning environment. With those two questions still in the forefront, the teaching assignment continued with the teacher-researcher drawing on previous experience and hence delivering the lesson in the traditional way of teaching English language to Chinese students in China

Several lessons were then prepared with various topics such as colours, animals, and food and the students were asked to vote on which topic they preferred to study. Most students chose colours.

The teaching basically followed these steps:

1. General discussion (capturing interest)
2. Pictures as resources (retaining interest)
3. Background explanations (reinforcing memory)
4. Pronunciation teaching (teacher modelling and students practicing)
5. Repetition

The following reflection captures the essence of these early lessons:

They asked me my favourite colour, and were told it was green. They were then shown cartoon pictures containing green, in order to impress them, and then taught its pronunciation by using 'Pinyin'. After several repetitions the class moved on to other colours, each one explained with a cultural demonstration, for

example: red is the cardinal colour of Chinese culture, because it stands for kinship and good luck. Telling stories worked very well, intriguing the students and capturing their attention. At the end of the class, I suggested students practice more after class or in their spare time. And I am very much looking forward to see how much they could absorb (Reflective Journal: November 6, 2014, p.2).

For the purpose of checking and comparing their learning progress, their classroom performances were observed and recorded in the reflective journal entries below:

And also, I tried to persuade them to find some similarities among those colours in Chinese. I didn't tell them in advance, because the process of self-discovery could be more memorable. So I taught them each colour's pronunciation in Chinese and finally they came up with the idea that, except the first changing symbol, the last symbol always remains as '色' (colour). It is a valuable conclusion. Once the students understood the method of combining words, learning Chinese could be a lot easier (Reflective Journal: November 6, 2014, p.2).

So in my last class I continued by introducing different colours in Chinese. At the beginning of this class, I wanted to check student's memory of the colours in Chinese we learnt last week. Unfortunately, none of them could recall any of the colours we had been practising and strengthening in the last class (Reflective Journal: November 13, 2014, p.1).

What was the reason for this? Was it lack of practice or unsuccessful teaching?

4.3.1.1 Limited time

A possible answer was the students' lack of opportunity to practice Chinese language during class time or in school. There were only two Australian born Chinese students in a school of more than 500 students, and these children were English-only speakers. The staff at this school were all English speakers, leaving only the teacher-researcher as a speaker of Chinese as a first language.

In that 30-minute class the students had handled the Chinese pronunciation of the colours well, so in that regard the pedagogy was successful on the day. Nonetheless there had been only 30 minutes to learn and practice the new Chinese vocabulary, and once the students had left the class, further opportunities for them to speak Chinese were few. The language learning environment needs to be supported by many opportunities for practice (Vandergrift, 2011), as memorisation is a gradual process requiring time.

4.3.1.2 School timetabling

The weekly Chinese language class schedule at BR Primary School for Stage 3 students is presented in Table 4.1 below. (This diagram also includes the previous 2 terms with the former voluntary Chinese teacher):

Table 4.1: Time-length of Chinese class in BR primary school, 2013
(For Stage 3 students, Year 5 and Year 6)

	Expected Time/ each	Actual Time (exclude preparation, scripture)	Actual lessons (exclude excursion, holidays)	Total time-length
Term 1	30 mins	25 mins	11	275 mins
Term 2	50 mins	45 mins	9	405 mins
Term 3	40 mins	30 mins	11	330 mins
Term 4	30 mins	25 mins	12	300 mins
Total				1310 mins

Table 4.1 shows Stage 3 students in BR Primary School spent approximately 1300 mins, equalling nearly 21 hours of Chinese classes across four terms (one year). Core subjects such as English, Math and Science are about 45 mins for each class. Calculating the annual time spent in Math classes for example, would give this result:

45 mins multiplies 3 lessons/per week multiplies 4 multiplies 9 months equal 4860 mins equal 81 hours.

Therefore, the ratio between the time-length of Chinese and Math class was:

21 hours: 81 hours  nearly 1:4

Compared with other subject lessons taught in school, the time spent in Chinese class was extremely limited. The curriculum stipulated by the government should be considered as the minimum time for school students to comparatively understand and gain a command of the target knowledge. From the observations during this early stage Chinese language teaching by the teacher-researcher, this lack of time allocated

for Chinese classes in BR Primary School appeared to disadvantage students' learning of Chinese language and culture.

4.3.2 Discontinuous learning

Maintaining continuity during second language learning is considered a very essential factor (Vandergrift, 2011). Continuity enables lessons to flow and connect with practice and new learning more likely to be retained. A continuous language learning process refers to quite often checking on the latest words and phrases, to review and enhance memory (Vandergrift, 2011). From observations in the scheduling of Chinese language classes in BR Primary School the reality was that students' learning featured discontinuity.

Students had little opportunities for practice or review of what they learnt in an already too-short class timetable. Upon leaving the Chinese-speaking environment of the classroom their exposure to Chinese language was minimal. For language learning, maintaining continuity is significant. A discontinuous learning schedule is counterproductive to the accumulation of words and phrases and impairs student's motivation for learning.

4.3.2.1 Questionnaire to gauge students' interest in Chinese language learning

With this challenge identified it was decided to gauge the students' perspectives to the Chinese language classes by asking them to complete a questionnaire. The following on-class questionnaire was administered to Stage 3 students who had just finished 2 terms' Chinese learning.

Quick Survey

Gender: _____ Age: _____ Class: _____

1. Do you enjoy learning Chinese?

A. Yes, a lot B. It's ok C. Not really D. Not at all

2. Are you happy with the arrangement and time-length for Chinese class each week?

A. Yes, a lot B. It's ok C. Not really D. Not at all

3. According to Question 2, if not, why? Select the following reasons listed below.

A. too rush

B. too long

C. Chinese itself is too difficult

D. no interests in learning Chinese

E. others: _____

4. Do you want to have more Chinese classes every week?

A. Yes B. Don't care C. not really D. Not at all

5. According to Question 4, if yes, how many Chinese classes would you like to have each week?

A. 2 B. 3 C. 4 D. as many as possible

6. What other suggestions you have? Please write it down.

Thank you very much for the participation!

The following table shows the summary of student (N=99) choices for each item.

Table 4.2: Summary of students' results to quick questionnaire on Chinese class

Student Selection of Multiple Choice	QUESTION NUMBER				
	1	2	3	4	5
A	53	18	38	69	23
B	28	29	2	20	31
C	11	38	10	5	8
D	7	14	2	5	19

4.3.2.2 Discussion of questionnaire results

Table 4.2 indicates the students' fondness for Chinese learning and their interest in receiving more Chinese classes.

For the first question ***'Do you enjoy learning Chinese?'*** 81 students chose 'Yes, a lot' and 'It's ok', only 18 students chose 'Not really' and 'Not at all'. This indicates that over 80% of participating students enjoyed, or were not opposed to, Chinese classes. Chinese itself seemed attractive to the students. These figures also suggest that it is to the teacher's advantage being able to teach students who actually do have an interest in learning Chinese. Perhaps then, it is the teacher who is to blame for failing to guide them to a satisfying learning outcome.

Questions 2-5 engaged students to think about the issue of available time for Chinese language learning.

Question 2 'Are you happy with the arrangement and time-length for Chinese class each week?' 'Yes' was chosen by 47 students while 52 chose 'not satisfied', indicating slightly more than half of the participating students were dissatisfied with the arrangement and time-length for Chinese language learning. This might indicate that students felt not enough Chinese had been learned in 30-40 mins.

Question 3 'According to Question 2, if not, why? Select the following reasons listed below.' Among the 52 students who chose 'unsatisfied' with the time-length of the Chinese class, 38 thought the Chinese class was 'too rushed', and there were 10 students thought Chinese 'was difficult to learn'. The results show that the short time-length was an issue that students were concerned about.

Question 4 ‘Do you want to have more Chinese classes every week?’ ‘Yes was chosen by 69 students while 30 students chose ‘don’t care’ or ‘no’. This result also corresponds to the results of previous questions.

Question 5 ‘According to Question 4, if yes, how many Chinese classes would you like to have each week?’ Among the 89 students who wanted to have more Chinese classes, 31 students chose ‘3 classes’, 23 students chose ‘2 classes’, 8 students chose ‘4 classes’ while 19 students indicated they would prefer ‘as many as possible’. This result shows an exciting phenomenon – students wanted to have more Chinese classes.

The findings of this questionnaire indicate that most students hold a strong interest in learning Chinese language and therefore disinterest is not the reason for their lack of recall and learning of the Chinese vocabulary targeted in the lessons provided. It would hence indicate that the continuity and time allocation for lessons and review could be a contributing factor.

4.3.2.3 Continuity in second language learning

Kardaleska (2009) emphasises that continuity in foreign language learning is integral to success. Kardaleska’s (2009) study was conducted across European countries with participants from multilingual backgrounds. However there are examples within this study with applicability to this research. For example:

Early exposure to foreign languages raises a series of issues in terms of designing and implementing language policies. ...

continuity ... demands a harmonisation of objectives, coherent organisation and systematic continuity of learning experiences at all the levels of education (Kardaleska, 2009, p.802).

Emphasising ‘language learning continuity’, Kardaleska’s findings range from considering the continuity of opportunity for language learning across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors as optimal, but contend that for sustained long term second language learning, two critical factors are:

- *The age when it most appropriate to start teaching the first, second and third foreign languages, and*
- *The length (how many hours per week, and how many years) of teaching foreign languages (Kardaleska, 2009, p. 803)*

This research supports the findings from this international study (Kardaleska, 2009), in that there needs to be a significant increase in the time allocation to foreign language teaching to allow for genuine long term success for students, particularly young students learning a foreign language.

4.3.3 Stereotypes of China as obstacles

China or Chinese culture is often represented in the eyes of the Western world by icons such as Peking Opera, roast duck, pandas, spring rolls, spring festival, Tian-An Square and Shanghai. These were also part of the teaching content of the previous

ROSETE teacher whose classes were observed. These culture-based topics provided ample opportunities to capture the interests of the students.

In order to build on what the previous ROSETE volunteer had taught these students it was considered necessary to gauge the extent of their previous knowledge in order to build on this for further lessons. The question “*What do you know about China?*” was posed to students. The responses repeated several times were:

Student A: ‘The Great Wall!’

Student B: ‘Kung-Fu Panda!’

Student C: ‘Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee!’

Student D: ‘Too many people!’

Student E: ‘Chinese food!’

(Reflective Journal: September 19, 2013, p.1).

The responses from these Australian students’ indicate they have been significantly influenced by television and Hollywood icons. For example, the combination of Kung-Fu and Panda is the result of the recent children’s movie. Interestingly, the Chinese popular culture industry has never created a single universally recognised character or symbol to represent China to overseas people. Japanese culture, shares an equivalent or even more popular status to Chinese culture, in terms of icons known by students in Australia.

4.3.3.1 Confusion between China and Japan

Whilst trying to gauge students' understanding about China and Chinese culture, the difference between Chinese and Japanese language and culture was not something that was very clear with these Stage 3 students. Some students used Japanese words as a greeting in the Chinese class, assuming it was Chinese. When it was pointed out that the greeting was Japanese and not Chinese, the students gained this understanding, but overall what they thought of as their knowledge of China was sometimes actually knowledge of Japan. The students often asked about characters from Japanese comics and asked questions, such as:

'Ms, have you seen a Ninja?'

'Ms, my favourite Chinese food is Sushi, can you make me some?'

The influence of contemporary Japanese culture on Australia's young people is profound. Astro Boy, for example, created by Mr Osamu Tezuka, blasted onto Brisbane television each afternoon at 4 o'clock in 1966 and became part of the collective sub-consciousness of the 1960's generation. Since then, Astro Boy and many new Japanese animations, anime and comics, and manga have entertained young Australian audiences. A number of successful cartoon characters and video games, accepted by Australian youngsters, have been created by combining contemporary arts with traditional Japanese culture (Adlington, 2007). The student's Chinese class references to Japanese and Japanese culture was thought-provoking.

In China the industry that records the creation and evolution of Chinese culture is expanding through television and the internet. But why is Chinese popular culture not so well-known in Australia? The reasons could be:

1. A contemporary media transmit agency is missing
2. The cultural product itself is not compatible with Western world
3. The disadvantageous economic status (cultural products reflect economy status)
4. Prejudices and stereotypes obstruct people from understanding a new China

This is not to dismiss that criticisms of China and Chinese culture, at all levels are always unreasonable. There is some degree of legitimation behind these criticisms based on the distances between the languages (English and Chinese), and the divergence between the political and education agendas.

4.3.3.2 Language and culture

Language learning is closely connected to culture (Adlington, 2007). Learning a second language is learning a new culture at the same time. They cannot be separated. The reality is however that long-existing prejudices and stereotypes about China cannot be eliminated immediately. Nowadays the world is a global village with the technological blessing of the Internet. With bountiful and updated information, the Internet makes anything possible, especially in providing a window for people of different countries to get connected to share and exchange ideas.

This has provided the background for the introduction of Information Technology into Chinese language classes. If learning a language solely serves a communication function, then traditional grammar-based teaching would normally be sufficient; however this approach has many disadvantages, especially for primary and secondary beginning learners. These disadvantages have already been seen in some

Chinese language lessons conducted by the teacher-researcher and have been identified as:

- Students became irritated when given learning materials such as word by word learning and pronunciation correction
- Negative feedback from students¹
- Student's preferences for other teaching materials (Chinese pop music, comics and movies).

Connecting Chinese teaching to online resources, the expectations for Australian students in learning Chinese would be:

- Extending their knowledge of China and Chinese modern culture through the latest information sharing under the guidance of the teacher.
- Helping students to build up the ability to form their own judgements on China and Chinese culture.

For the teacher the advantages would be:

- Using advanced information technology and useful resources to facilitate Chinese language lesson preparation.

¹ Being a native Chinese volunteer teacher-researcher participating in the Australian school system is challenging. The educational systems (curriculum, pedagogy and students themselves) are very different when comparisons are made between China and Australia (see Chapter 1, Table 1.1). Accepting negative feedback requires maturity. This thesis demonstrates that engaging students in language lessons where social media complements classroom teaching can create a positive classroom environment where teacher/student rapport is fostered and negative feedback may be less frequent.

- Realising the goal of teaching Chinese language specifically but also including other relevant information about China at the same time.

Interest-driven learning would be most effective and efficient for primary school children, especially those around 10 years old. Observations and reflections in this research show the students to be enthusiastic about popular culture – music, comics, movies and games. Given the students’ confusion between Chinese and Japanese cliché Chinese cultural stereotypes should no longer be considered adequate stimulus for them to increase their interest in learning Chinese. Instead, images of a modern and popular China could better assist their language learning, as well as culture understanding. The obstacle of China and Chinese cultural stereotypes should be gradually eliminated or augmented through the introduction of modern and popular Chinese content. It may be that these stereotypical responses are caused in some respects by young children having not experienced contact and friendships with Chinese people locally.

4.3.4 The disadvantageous social status of Chinese in Australia

The social status of one nationality, to an extent, influences the importance and spoken frequency of its language around the world. This issue is even more influential in a country which has experienced considerable migration. When a multitude of different races live in one society, they need to interact socially. When various traditions, cultures and living habits are melted in one big pot, language is one of the distinguishing features. Idealistically, every nationality’s equality is the highest level of harmony, however there is generally one nationality (local nationality in most cases) that wants to stand out as being the dominant one, the

leader. When one nationality reaches a comparatively high level of social status, it expects other nationalities in this society be its subordinate. Within this context 'racism' flourishes. Racism in a present day scenario often possesses contradictions (Collins, 2006). It is relatively commonplace to see 'successful' persons from ethnic or minority backgrounds within professional circles. At the same time, it is even more common to see trolley pickers, car washers and cleaners from these same minority groups (Collins, 2006).

During the era of the 'White Australia policy' in Australia, racial discrimination was much more serious and open. With the abolishment of the White Australia Policy, in today's Australian society racism is found in more subtle manifestations. In the present environment, overt or blatant forms of racism are less common (Better, 2008, p. 68).

Though racism still exists within Australian society, only a minor part of the population expresses it in an overt form. For instance, Dunn's (2003) work shows that only around 12 percent of Australian respondents actively labelled themselves as racist (Dunn, 2003, p. 8). Overt and blatant forms of racism have become perceived as a thing of the past. Better (2008, p. 68) summarises this view when she writes: "It is no longer 'cool' in most parts of the society to make racist jokes, to voice racial prejudice, and it is now illegal to overtly discriminate in employment."

This has fed the impression that racism is no longer an issue of concern (Davis, 2007, p. 349) or a thing of the past (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2006, p.653). According to Bonilla-Silva (2006), racism and prejudice are either not as frequently discussed today as they were a decade ago. He notes that,

The dominant view among whites and among some academic quarters in the 1990s (and still is) is that whites have become more tolerant than ever and that racism although still a problem, is not as central factor that it was in the past (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 55).

The social trend seems quite reasonable in a democratic and civilized modern world. Some conservative intellectuals in the U.S.A., have even gone so far as to argue we are living in a ‘post racial society’ (D’Souza, 1996). Despite the fact that many Australians have already changed their old prejudices towards immigrants in a general way, however as Better et al (2008, p. 68) writes,

Racism in the workplace is still as widespread but less overt. Consider different voices from those skilled immigrants of various backgrounds, the unanimous feedback delivered by them [regarding] workplace equality is: it is hard to realize employment equality in Australia.

Many immigrants have been discriminated against or disregarded when it comes to equality in employment. Even with equivalent qualifications, candidates from different nationalities are often considered as non-contenders for many jobs. Many stories abound concerning Australian born people with overseas ethnic backgrounds who are judged non-competitively based on family name or even skin colour when seeking employment.

4.3.4.1 On being a Chinese teacher

In this research the teacher-researcher was the only native Chinese person at the school, from the 50 local Australian school staff. The observation was also made that occasionally casual relief teachers were Chinese or from other Asian countries.

In Collins and Reid's (2012) study 'Immigrant Teachers in Australia', a comprehensive investigation into the teachers with immigrant backgrounds working in Australia was explored. This article cites the overall situation of Australian teachers with immigrant backgrounds including some important information such as the nationality percentage of all teachers and their feedback regarding current work circumstances and conditions. Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of teachers with Non-Australian ancestry in Australia.

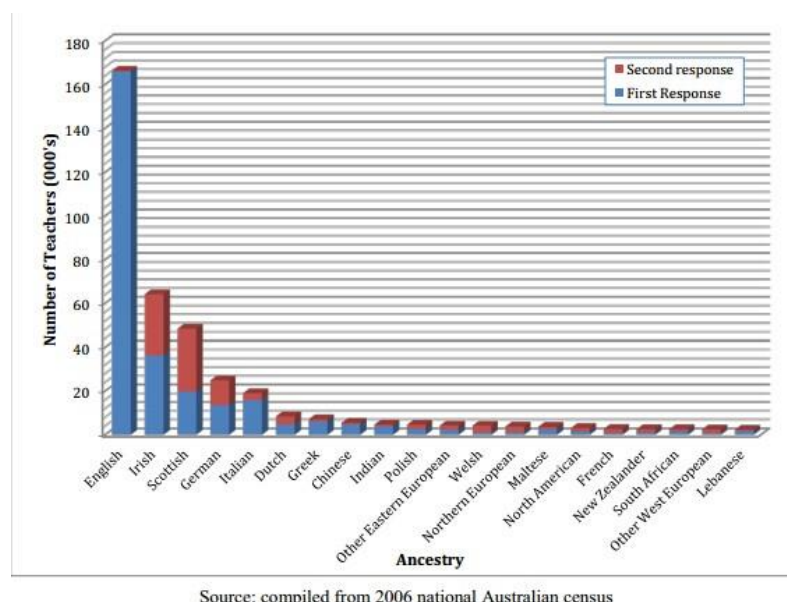


Figure 4.1: Non-Australian ancestry of teachers in Australia

Source:(<http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/mcs/article/viewFile/2553/3050>)

Figure 4.1 shows clearly that the majority of teachers in Australia have an English background. Regardless of the comparatively large population of Chinese people

living in Australia, the percentage of Australian teachers with Chinese ancestry is not significant.

In this study, Collins and Reid (2012) asked immigrant teachers: ‘what difficulties, if any, have you faced as an immigrant teacher in Australia?’ The most common answer (see Figure 4.2) was that immigrant teachers had problems with the bureaucratic systems and processes that they encountered in Australian schools. The difficulties that ranked next (half as often) were: employment difficulties; discrimination/racism and lack of support (Collins and Reid, 2012, p.15).

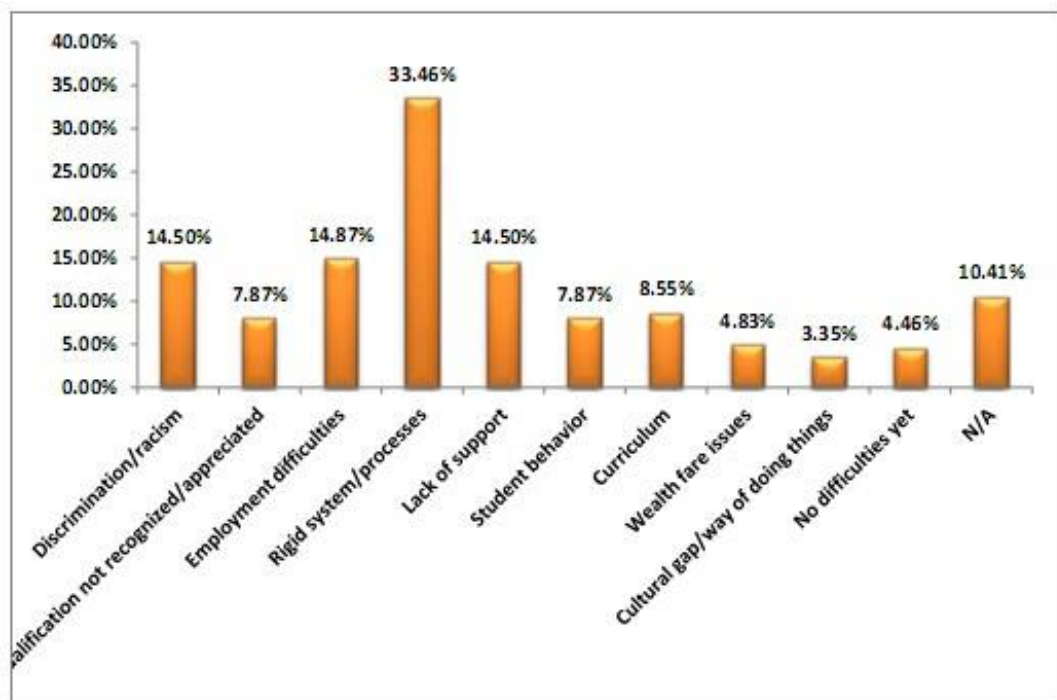


Figure 4.2: The difficulties that immigrant teachers face in Australian schools

Source:

(<http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/mcs/article/viewFile/2553/3050>)

Collins and Reid (2012) also surveyed immigrant teachers in Australia to discover if their expectations as teachers had been met. Their results indicated less than 30% of all the participants thought their expectations had been met. The majority thought

their expectations of working as a teacher in Australia had not or only partly been met (See Figure 4.3).

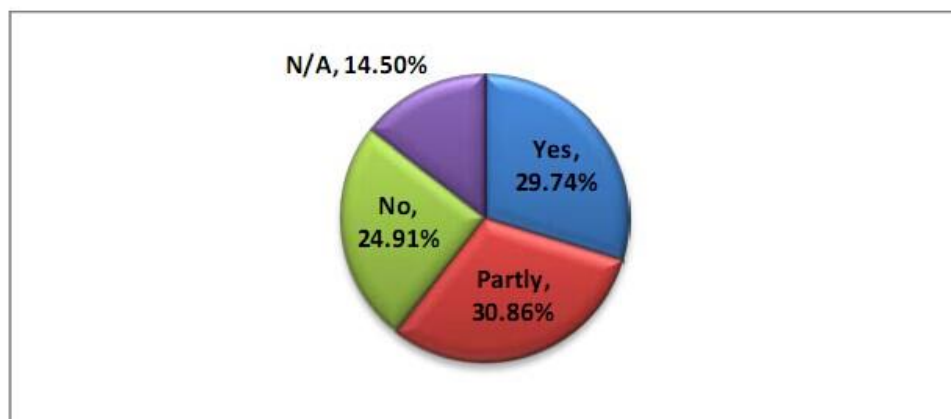


Figure 4.3: Have your expectations of being a teacher in Australia been met?

Sources: (<http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/mcs/article/viewFile/2553/3050>)

The issue of employment for Chinese and other expatriates is not only confined to the teaching profession. In James and Otsuka's (2009) study of Chinese students who finish accounting in Australian universities the findings indicated that Australian companies were more likely to choose local white Australian graduates regardless of the fact that Chinese accounting graduates were bilingual and were as highly qualified. This study investigated the experiences of ten Chinese students who studied accounting and sought employment in Australia. Figure 4.4 displays the findings of the interviews with these graduands.

Job-search and employment outcomes (self-reported) for each interviewee in the sample (n=10) and in total.								
Name	Age	Present location	No. applications (A)	No. interviews (I)	I/A (%)	Full time job?	Full time prof job?	F/T main-stream firm?
Henry	21	Sydney	70	2	2.86	Yes	Yes	2-month contract
Seb	31	Sydney	100+	1	1.00	Yes	No	No
Sophia	35	Toowoomba	100	4	4.00	No	No	No
Candy	23	Sydney	100+	4	4.00	Yes	Yes	No
Vivian	32	Wagga	15–16	3	20.0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Melissa	29	Sydney	30	3	10.0	No	No	No
Joe	27	Melbourne	50+	3–4	8.00	Yes	No	No
Jessie	29	Melbourne	4	2	50.0	No	No	No
Mabel	25	Wagga	0	0	–	Yes	No	No
Helen	24	Wagga	10	0	–	No	No	No
Total			479+	23	12.48			

Note: (a) Applications (A) and Interviews (I) columns refer only to professional accounting jobs. Interviews include telephone interviews. Second interviews with the same hirer are not included in A or I columns. Information correct as at date of interviews (12/2006–8/2007). All interviewee names (but none of the other details) are changed. (b) Joe sent over 200 applications total, but the majority were for marketing positions. His job at the date of the interview (July 2007) was selling credit cards for American Express in Melbourne city centre working full-time hours. Joe and his wife Jessie presently (in November 2007) work full-time hours in a cleaning franchise business that they jointly purchased. (c) Mabel's partner is a part-owner of a Chinese restaurant based in Wagga Wagga and Mabel works approximately 48 h per week at the restaurant. This is classified as a full-time job, but not as a professional job for the purposes of the Table since accounting and tax work only amounts to an average of 2 h per week. (d) Candy and Helen both returned to China late in 2007 (after the date of interviews). Henry and Melissa are studying Masters of Applied Finance and Actuarial Studies, respectively, in Sydney in 2007. Sebastian (Seb) returned to Wagga in late 2007 for a training course to qualify to work as Finance Officer with Australian Armed Forces.

Figure 4.4: Job-search and employment outcomes (self-reported) for each interviewee in the sample (n=10) and in total (James and Otsuka, 2009)

The findings of this study report that the Chinese interviewees talked about the language issue and were reminded that their Chinese accent was a deterrent to their gaining entry into the Australian workforce. Some Australian employers even sought ‘real’ Australian language speakers, which blatantly indicated their intentions to employ English background graduates. Consequently, even if some Chinese graduates received a PR (Permanent Residency) in Australia, they could still encounter a reduced employment status when seeking a ‘decent’ job. Many of the interviewees finally found employment in small businesses, sales promotion, cleaning, catering, labour and other more ‘low status’ work. These Chinese graduates were dissatisfied with their unacknowledged skills in Australia. It was reported that the majority of these Chinese graduates left and returned to China (James and Otsuka, 2009).

Three reasons account for the unfavorable current status of Chinese graduates in Australia trying to find a major-related job:

1. Chinese graduate's language ability is not as good as local graduates; employers prefer real 'Australian language speakers'.
2. Subtle discrimination issues in the Australian workplace.
3. Their lack of Australian socialisation and level of familiarity with local conventions in different aspects.

As Osler and Starkey (2000) point out, racism is firmly associated with extremism, and when directly addressed in a cause, it can be seen as extremist political movements. Everyday attitudes and stereotyping may serve to disadvantage minority populations and may lead to disadvantage in education and employment. However, racism is a social phenomenon that can be found in most countries (Kubota, 2003). In the context of learning a second language it was not found to be a major obstacle in this research. This may be due, in part, to Australia having numerous government policies supporting student's learning of Asian languages, as well as the prevalence of Chinese communities and cultural influences in most cities and town. Alternatively, people's limited knowledge of China and Chinese culture might result in their biased opinions and comments toward China and learning Chinese language. Hence, as Kramsch (2006) states, cultural learning needs to be an integral component of foreign language learning – teaching culturally-embedded language lessons is a positive approach to attempt to stem racism in the classroom. Students are engaged to learn about the language itself as well as the sociocultural context of the words themselves.

Further Hill (1999) contends that language acquisition is a process that involves the interaction of social and cultural components, and through this practice learners can

better understand and develop a positive perspective towards a country, its language and culture.

In terms of the issue raised in this thesis concerning Chinese graduates receiving job rejections due to racial discrimination, references show that the main reasons appear to be their lack of Australian working experience, lack of knowledge of Australian culture and sometimes lack of spoken and written English ability (James and Otsuka, 2009). Racial discrimination might be one of the reasons, but it may not be the main reason. As Ruble and Zhang (2013) point out, stereotypes of Chinese international students held by Western countries vary, that is, it all depends on different personal characteristics, profiles and qualities. Consequently, Chinese students should be more focused on improving their knowledge and skills to accommodate to the needs of the Australian society and requirements needed for the working environment

As there are more and more Chinese students receiving higher education in Australia, their employment issues are becoming increasingly urgent. Every student coming to Australia is hoping to apply what was learnt in university into practical work. Finishing a degree without gaining work experience could be a negative factor in attracting more Chinese students to study in Australian universities.

4.3.4.2 Advantages accrued through the ROSETE program

Similarly, the same unfavorable employment situation faces other Chinese students studying different majors in Australian universities. Volunteer Mandarin teachers in the ROSETE teacher program have benefited significantly from undertaking Mandarin teaching work in Australian public schools while studying for a university

research degree. Aside from the academic work, the teachers gained precious experience teaching Australian students, learning the Australian education curriculum and deepening a degree of Australian socialisation, an opportunity never provided to other Chinese graduates.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, questionnaires, observations and reflective journals were the methods of data collection for the teacher-researcher to explore how Chinese language teaching and learning was operating in the allocated classroom. Data were collected to access students' existing knowledge of Chinese language and culture. Coding these data enabled the analysis to reveal the emerging themes relating to the current classroom practices under exploration. The main obstacles for students learning Chinese in BR Public School are: limited time length, discontinuity in learning, and stereotypical views of Chinese culture and the unfavourable social status of Chinese people in Australia.

In terms of exploring the first contributory research question: “Is there a space within current Chinese language teaching and learning pedagogies to introduce Edmodo?” the data reveal that overwhelmingly the limited time allocation for on-class Chinese language teaching is a critical issue. If Edmodo can interest the students to continue with further practice and study in off-class time, then there is an important space for Edmodo to exert a supporting role for Chinese language learning, once students are introduced to its functions in class.

The identification of the limited time allocated to Chinese language learning in BR Primary School as impacting negatively on students learning supports the findings by Vandergrift (2011), who contends time to practice language learning is critical. Similarly discontinuity of lessons also contributed to challenges for students' memorization of targeted Chinese vocabulary. The study by Kardaleska (2009) further supports that lesson continuity is a key to successful, sustained second language learning.

In attempting to access students' prior understanding and knowledge, this chapter identified that the students' current understandings were influenced by popular culture as it portrayed various Chinese icons, identities and symbols. Most notable was the students' confusion between what popular culture was Chinese and what was Japanese.

Even though the findings in this chapter signal classroom strategies that were not engaging the students, resulting in negative feedback from students and lack of interest and motivation, teachers should none the less, continually hold high expectations for students' learning. Despite the obstacles and limitations that might occur during teaching, teachers should look for, and make use of, any existing opportunities to implement effective strategies to teach creative and thoughtful lessons. For example, asking students' questions is an effective strategy to put teachers in touch with students' understandings, interests and existing knowledge. Learning is linked to everyday life and social interactions (Vygotsky cited in Liang, 2013). Learning occurs as a shared experience in a range of social settings (Liang, 2013). Consequently, teachers can always find important information from students' answers to understand their existing, funds of knowledge from everyday life

experiences, and use these to make informed decisions regarding teaching strategies and content for following lessons. For example, in the context of Chinese language learning, if students are asked: “What do you know about China?” whatever answers are received from students are a valuable resource. If students have limited background knowledge and can draw only on stereotypical ideas such as Panda Bears or Kung-Fu, then with high expectations, teachers of Chinese language can extend and broaden students’ understandings beyond the stereotypical.

The findings in this chapter have indicated that there is a gap in the current strategies of classroom Chinese language teaching and learning. These findings open a space for introducing Edmodo in Chinese learning, which provides the focus in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

EDMODO – REFLECTIONS ON THE EDUCATIONAL USE OF THIS SOCIAL NETWORK SITE

The research presented in Chapter 5 continues the exploration of the main research question: *How can social media (Edmodo in this case) best exert a supporting role in facilitating students' Chinese language learning?* by turning the focus to contributory research question two: *In what ways/strategies can Edmodo be used to supplement on-class teaching and enhance students' Chinese language learning?*

In Chapter 4 the conclusion was that there is a space for a new and different pedagogy to support students' learning of Chinese language and one which can also address the limited time allocation for on-class L2 learning. The chapter begins with a discussion of the popularity of social media for young people and how it can be harnessed as an educational tool. A description of Edmodo as a social networking site is provided along with how it was implemented to support on-class learning for Stage 3 students at BR Public School. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research findings proposing that Edmodo supported Chinese language learning across 1) collaborative learning, 2) after-class learning, and 3) student self-learning behaviour.

5.1 Prevailing popularity of social network sites

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Google+, Myspace, LinkedIn and Twitter have now become commonplace in international virtual space. Approximately 75% of all online adults maintain at least one social network profile (Weber, 2012). Most social network sites are based on free service and practical functions. As they are generally commercially driven, educational goals are not their initial priority. Teaching and educational uses have been creatively adapted from those social network sites by educators and program builders. The potential educational benefits of social network sites are similar to regular e-learning advantages such as unrestricted time and space instruction, knowledge brainstorming, interconnectivity, collaboration, creativity and the opportunity of virtual role playing all of which are drawn upon in a totally different way in the non-virtual classroom.

The technological functions of social network sites bring us swift and convenient access to create, share, communicate and interact with other users. The sites regularly feature user-generated content that contains popular forms such as videos, pictures and text input. They allow users to create a personal profile, along with a space within which to upload sharable information. Other connected users can be entitled to do the same, thus it is like a massive connection web where all the members or friends can realise the goal of information sharing. Most sites have blocking and reporting mechanisms, and personal privacy settings, enabling users' control over who can view specific information. The whole system is much like a group where you can control the setting according to your own preferences, while at the same time receive and share information generated from other like-minded users. Each social

network site caters to different categories, such as Facebook, with its wide spectrum of users sharing daily news and events; LinkedIn, that focuses on professions and businesses; YouTube, which appeals to worldwide video sharing, and SoundCloud, which aims at music streaming. Then there is Edmodo, which has been specifically designed for educational purposes.

As social networking specialist Kear (2011) points out:

...by using online networking tools such as discussion forums, social network sites, Wikis, blogs and instant messaging, learners can carry out activities together. They can be members of online learning communities... (Kear, 2011, p.41).

However, simply giving learners communication tools will not automatically create a learning community. It requires a teacher with skill, knowledge and imagination to drive the site towards clear goals for student learning (Kear, 2011). This indicates clearly the importance of having a teacher's instructions during any study activities on any platform. This is because with the popularity of using social networking sites, it can also bring some potential and unpredictable problems, a teacher's role in virtual learning community is equally as important as in a physical classroom. Information technology is a beneficial resource brought about through scientific development, that can be adapted for educational purposes by drawing on ITs convenience and large array of resources. However, a teacher's role is instrumental to design programs to make best use of the advantages of virtual learning.

5.2 Social network sites for educational uses

Since a number of social networks with their many benefits exist worldwide, their appeal to educational uses is developing quickly. There are two reasons to explain this. First, the majority of people today are equipped with more than one digital device. Second, Internet use is becoming indispensable for nearly everyone. Combining these two reasons, social network sites are a potentially effective tool for creating, sharing and generating new ideas. People like getting connected with others from their own group based on the same purpose or interest. For example, if a group of students want to collaborate to finish a task on solving a physics problem, they could initiate a study group to help them progress as they can learn from other's opinions it helps to reduce unnecessarily excessive time and effort. With the Internet's support students can share the knowledge of the group, and source valuable information to contribute back to the group.

More and more students, referred to by Prensky (2001) as "digital natives" use social networking sites in their daily lives to share information through multimodal formats including videos, graphics, spreadsheets, and charts created using information and communication technologies (ICTs). ICTs are hardware and applications that help users access, retrieve, process, and communicate information. ICTs enable teachers and students to research information using extensive resources, produce work in multimedia formats to communicate their thoughts and ideas, collaborate, and extend discussion through virtual learning communities (Hsu, Wang and Green, 2013). Many teachers in schools have adopted ICTs to motivate and enhance student learning subjects in order to meet this new generation's immense interest in technology. Thus, social network sites are a wonderful platform for connecting

students and teachers to collaborate, communicate, share, organise and discuss studies via various ICTs.

Due to the fact that most SNSs allow users to create and share multiple study resources, they also help teachers to organise group discussions, collect credible resources and support student's learning. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating students' existing technology skills in the academic setting and cultivating new literacy in the digital era (Hsu and Wang, 2011). The term 'new literacy' refers to the knowledge and skills used in digital technologies to "identify questions, locate information, evaluate the information, synthesize information to answer questions, and communicate the answers to others" (Leu et al., 2004, p.24). This term is a reflection of a new explanation of literacy in a contemporary context. Students should be equipped with the new skills of understanding digital content for their preparation to successfully participate in the workforce of the future. The integration of social network sites and ICTs provide excellent methods for teachers to enrich student's learning practices and cultivate in them a sense of new literacy ability.

Language learning requires a dynamic learning environment and repetitive practice. A social network site has the potential to achieve this goal since it provides a resourceful and dynamic language learning environment.

5.3 Use of ICTs in Australian public school

In addition to the relaxed classroom atmosphere in the Australian school classroom that was observed, and their feature of being student-centred, there was another important characteristic, which was that information technology was commonly

used. For instance, every classroom was equipped with a Smart Board for lesson teaching and interactions and extra computers were available in a corner of the classroom for student's use. Teachers used social network sites such as YouTube to play videos and Google+ to search for learning references, and some Cloud classroom apps were accessed to award students for their work in a virtual community. This is a completely different classroom environment to that experienced in China. In the typical Chinese classroom, students are more used to a 'texturized' teaching pattern, where teacher-directed programs strictly adhere to text books, stationary teaching design, simple classroom equipment and fixed exam-oriented study goals.

Today's student interaction with media differs from previous generations. Schools now teach and nurture the collaborative and networking skills that students need in the social-networking in the Web 2.0 world (Rosenfeld, 2007). According to an article written by Newman (2008), a school curriculum manager in the Western Australian Education Department, Western Australia's public schools are gaining access to a new online teaching and learning system that offers a content management and search system, a web portal and curriculum information management applications. The program has been designed, built and evaluated by teams of curriculum and ICT experts. Goals listed are to: communicate and collaborate in an interactive online environment; access relevant syllabus and rich digital content through an easily used search engine; foster new online communities that share resources, ideas and experiences; undertake online professional learning, anytime, anywhere; connect students with other students in different classes and school locations to carry out tasks and assignments online. The program's full suite

of online services was to be progressively made available to all 800 Western Australian public schools by 2012 (Newman, 2008).

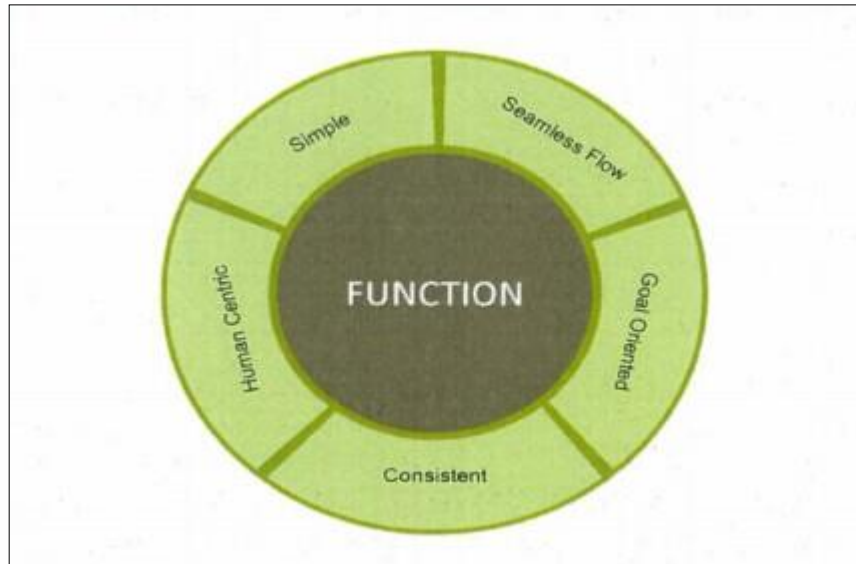


Figure 5.1: The five functions of the Western Australian school ICT strategy
Sources: (130 Ms Deborah Bevan, Manager Schooling at Department of Education, Western Australia, Briefing 21 August 2012)

The key functions of this innovative strategy to be rolled out across the Western Australian school system were that it needed to be: human centric, simple, seamless, goal oriented and consistent (See Figure 5.1). These functions allow teachers to access quality digital teaching and learning resources, create online learning opportunities and get access to a variety of online class tools to support learning.

The Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008) recognises that in a digital age, and with rapid and continuing changes in the ways that people share, use, develop and communicate with ICTs, young people need to be highly skilled in its use (MCEETYA, 2008). To participate in a knowledge-based economy and to be empowered within a technologically sophisticated society now

and into the future, students need the knowledge, skills and confidence to make ICT work for them at school, at home, at work and in their communities.

5.4 Edmodo: Justification as a support for Chinese learning in class

Edmodo is a well-known social learning network site that gives teachers and students an easy way to connect and collaborate in real time. It was founded on two ideals: freedom and security. The following description of Edmodo's features indicates its usefulness as a possible teaching tool to support Chinese language learning.

1. Information exchange: Edmodo can serve as an online learning community. It breaks the restrictions of real time and space so that registered students can access an open classroom at any time. It provides a platform for group members to exchange ideas and share content. As language is a very complicated and dynamic subject, Edmodo allows access to culture, history, tradition and many other influential factors in language learning. It is transforming and updating every second with flashes of language content being ephemeral; it is all dependent on accumulation and communication.
2. Share in a click: Anyone in the online learning group can post and discuss links to any related articles or videos on YouTube, as well as curriculum-related content such as mini-lessons and learning material templates for students.
3. Organizing students: A new feature called the 'Backpack' is a storage area for students where they can save homework, long-term projects, school notices, and more, then tap into them at home.

4. Easy access: In the grades tab, you can give a grade, view a list of all grades received for a given group, post comments, and even receive updates on how many students have turned in assignments.

Dobler (2012) has provided information on the use of Edmodo as a successful strategy to introduce new topics along with the associated new concepts and vocabulary in a way which literally ‘flattens classroom walls.’

Unlike English and many other European languages, Chinese has different pronunciation and written forms. It might be difficult and complex for Australian students to comprehend initially, and it requires time and effort. Due to the limited class time available during school hours, the teacher-researcher considered it desirable for this research to investigate how online Chinese learning activities, could support students; learning of words and phrases at any time and from anywhere. For example if students had questions, they could post them with the Chinese learning group so the teacher-researcher could respond and keep in touch with the students in and out of class.

5.4.1 Collaborative learning

One of the advantages in using Edmodo is developing collaborative abilities among students. Since Edmodo is an online learning community, every group member registered online can be connected to the others. They would be free to set up their own learning groups, collaborate with others to work on problems that arose during study. Due to the fact that every student is gifted for learning one subject or some areas in one subject, they can use their strengths to compensate others’ shortcomings

when it comes to solving a question together. Collaboration can be an indispensable strategy in accomplishing a task where multiple perspectives can assist. In a traditional classroom, teacher-directed lessons focus on the students as a whole, often not accounting for team work and collaboration.

Collaborative learning has received increasing attention over recent decades. According to Oxford (1997, p. 443):

Collaborative learning has a 'social constructivist' philosophical base, which views learning as construction of knowledge within a social context and which therefore, encourages acculturation of individuals into a learning community.

This statement has vividly described two distinct traits of collaborative learning, which is, construction of knowledge within a social context and the acculturation of a learning community (Wang and Chen, 2010). Oxford (1997, p.448) reviews the crucial contributions of linguists Dewey and Vygotsky to social constructivism by claiming that both “recognised that ideas have social origins; they are constructed through communication with others.” Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of social cognition holds that learning is, in essence, a socially mediated activity and social interaction that is significant to one’s cognitive development.

Vygotsky’s most cited definition of ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) best summarises his social cognition theory. His theory of ZPD (1978, p.86) refers to “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.”

As a consequence, the individual learner and the more capable peers constitute two significant dimensions in ZPD, the interaction of student and more capable peers is another way to explain how collaborative learning is a useful strategy for problem solving, and one in which Edmodo can have a significant impact. In an Internet-based online synchronous learning context, the two aspects of collaborative learning identified by Oxford (1997), that is, the construction of knowledge within a social context and the acculturation of individuals into a learning community, rely heavily on the technologies used. In this regard, a third dimension could be added to the ZPD in an online learning context: mediating technology. This third dimension is becoming increasingly important as Internet technologies have become an integral part of the education industry, especially for distance education (Wang and Chen, 2012). Internet technology can facilitate classroom teaching by offering various advantages for maximising collaborative language learning in an online context.

5.4.1.1 Collaborative learning and second language acquisition

The positive effects of collaborative learning on second language acquisition have long been recognised in studies conducted in the physical face-to-face classroom (Kim, 2008). In recent years, collaborative language learning mediated through technologies has also received increasing attention from researchers in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), so much so, that the terms ‘Tele-collaboration’ and ‘E-Tandem’ have appeared to denote the collaboration of learners at a distance via Internet-based technologies (Kim, 2008).

Online collaborative language learning can generally be divided into asynchronous and synchronous collaboration (Wang and Chen, 2012). The first type asynchronous

collaboration is often text-based and mediated by asynchronous technologies such as emails and web-based bulletin boards (Appel and Gilabert, 2002). The other type - synchronous collaboration, occurs when participants interact simultaneously in real time, and these can be text-based, audio, and/or video-based, or a combination of the three.

5.4.1.2 Edmodo supporting collaborative Chinese language learning

Edmodo's online learning platform has realised both asynchronous and synchronous collaborative study modes. It is mainly a text-based social network platform, so it supports online and offline text services among users. At the same time, digital file sharing and transmitting is another major feature for collaborative learning.

Research on collaborative learning supported through the combination of online synchronous text, oral, and visual interaction is still lacking. The paucity of such research has mostly resulted from being unable to study systems that can seamlessly integrate written, oral, and visual interaction into a single platform (Wang and Chen, 2012). However, the rapid development of Internet broadband and the growth of enabling synchronous technologies helps to integrate these elements into a possible reality. The special term 'cyber face-to-face' is adopted here to encapsulate the kind of online learning environment that is characterised by a combination of the oral/aural, visual, and text-based interaction (Wang and Chen, 2012). As a consequence very little research has been conducted that explores online collaborative language learning under such a circumstance, and a number of essential key points remain undiscovered or untouched. For instance, is it possible for a synchronous classroom with 'cyber face-to-face' features to be able to support

collaborative foreign language learning within a distance mode? If so, in what way can it effectively be put into practice and how can the impact, good and bad, be examined? With these questions in mind, one of the goals is to reveal all these possibilities, challenges and limitations of such an online learning community in supporting and enhancing student's ability of collaboration in language learning, that is, implementing Edmodo in the classroom.

5.4.1.3 Edmodo in the classroom

Edmodo was used to introduce the students to new Chinese vocabulary and information related to cultural topics and events. Table 5.1 below presents some common collaborative learning behaviours observed and concluded from Edmodo in BR Public School.

Table 5.1: Collaborative learning behaviours on Edmodo

Collaborative Learning Behaviours On Edmodo		
<p>Question & Answer :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When student A poses a question, student B and student C both know parts of the answer, they discuss together and figure out the answer. 2. When nobody knows the answer to the question, every student works together in small groups to find out the answer through joint efforts. 	<p>Information Sharing:</p> <p>Every group member (student) can post any relevant learning material in Edmodo platform, this useful information can be reposted, shared and communicated.</p> <p>Members (students) can also comment and compensate under each piece of information. Those interactions are mainly conducted under the weekly learning goal.</p>	<p>Review and Explore:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will be split into groups and collaborate together to finish weekly after-class work. 2. For some capable students, they can explore their further interests in learning Chinese by collaborating with other students

As the teacher in a Chinese learning community implementing Edmodo, it has been possible to record a number of observations while the students were conducting activities on Edmodo. The younger Australian generation's enthusiasm for computer

technologies and their daily habit of social networking caused a number of online activities to carry on continuously. The students' online behaviours could be observed, such as the frequency of their visits, the average time spend and their communicative conduct in a virtual learning community.

The observation results show collaboration to be a distinct feature of students' learning activity on Edmodo, unlike the Chinese education system where students tended to focus on their own individual studies, and collaboration is not commonly practiced. Rankings and competitively trying to be above peers is a long-existing tradition within Chinese schools, the result being solitary study and individual effort. This study mode can be criticised as inefficient, slow and at times discouraging. Joint efforts among students, coupled with the benefits of utilising Internet technologies, can make collaborative learning behaviours efficient and passionate.

5.4.2 After-class learning

It is commonly accepted that after-class review, or after-class learning is an essential part in study. Stoloff (2008, p.1211) argues that word processing applications such as those used in online homework “help students to acquire and integrate learning; practice, review and apply learning...” For second language learning, this process is even more significant. Language learning is closely connected to memory. Short-term memory on new words and phrases can hardly guarantee a continuous and long-lasting command of a new language. Having after-class reviews and quizzes are indeed necessary when it comes to Chinese language learning but, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, a lower than average amount of Chinese class time makes it difficult for students to review or reinforce new words they have just been taught.

Arguably then, prolonged after-class learning time using Internet technologies under a teacher's guidance can serve a useful purpose in this Information Technology society.

The MacArthur Foundation Report on Digital Media and Learning (Ito et al, 2008) presents findings from a study investigating how young people learn, play, socialise, and participate in civic life. This study delves into transforming traditional study sites (classrooms) to a non-school site, preferably through the platform of social network systems. In general terms, compulsory mass schooling – which is standard across most of the world – is how most societies invest in the education of young people as their future citizens and workers (Sefton-Green, 2012). This statement generally summarises the basic characteristics and aims of education. However education itself does not need to be geographically restrained to an actual 'school', or 'classroom'.

Eric Langhorst teaches 8th grade American history at South Valley Junior High School in Liberty, Missouri. He published an article titled *After the Bell, Beyond the Walls*, based on his personal experiences teaching students by using Internet technologies to break the boundaries created by limited time and learning opportunities in the classroom.

Technology has enabled me to do just that. In my 8th grade American history class in Liberty, Missouri, my students now read books and blog about them with people who live in different states, interact online with authors and panels of experts, and study for tests where and when they want by listening to information downloaded to their MP3 players.....Our world is increasingly

about having media – music, video games, phone calls, or streaming video – at our convenience ANYWHERE and ANYTIME (Langhorst, 2007, p.74).

Langhorst (2007) also explained his own understanding of being a ‘modern’ teacher by utilising information technologies:

Teachers can use the same tools that make online courses successful to expand learning opportunities in the classroom. Today, anyone can publish text, audio, images, or video on the Web quickly and at no charge using blogs, wikis, podcasts, and video-sharing sites like YouTube. Students use these social networking tools and applications to visit with one another, entertain themselves, and view media of their choice. Why not use these tools to deliver content to students and assess their understanding? (Langhorst, 2007, p.74).

Langhorst reports how his students were supported to develop the habit of using digital learning devices, (social network platforms) with successful learning outcomes. Learning groups of interested students were established and after every class, review work, assignments, quick quizzes, and expanded learning materials were posted. The findings cited were that this experiment in after-class learning was successful. Not only did participating students enjoy this method of knowledge acquisition, but they also learned efficiently (Langhorst, 2007).

Since technology is being applied in more and more fields, why not education? Why limit learning to a 40-minute time slot? Information technology can enable every

student to learn wherever and whenever they want. Students in the research at BR Public School also felt that the allocated time stifled their Chinese language learning as was recorded in the teacher-researcher's journal entry cited below:

After several weeks Chinese teaching task, both students and I have felt getting, used to this learning pace. Those students always give me positive feedbacks about my Chinese class. Sometimes they will sigh when I say 'Okay, our time is finished'. And today, once again, when I stepped out of the classroom, I heard one student complaining 'why is our Chinese class so short?' (Reflective Journal: October 16, 2013, p. 12).

5.4.2.1 BR Public School students' time on the internet at home

Most students in Australia are equipped with at least one computer with Internet access at home. To discover the students' time distribution and online activities on the Internet in their homes they were asked to record their response to the question "What do you usually do on your computer at home? The results are displayed in Figure 5.2.

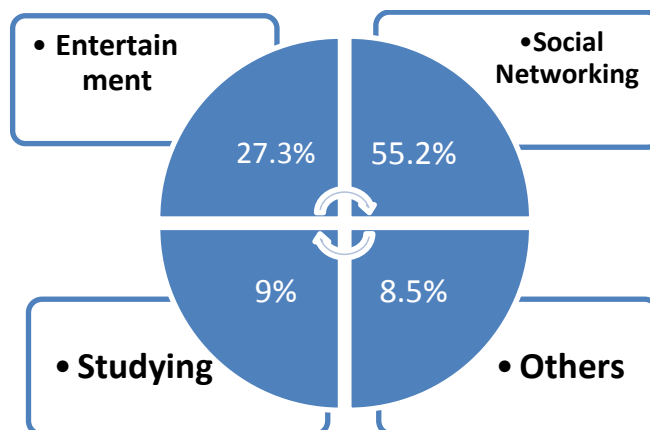


Figure 5.2: The computer activity coverage of Stage 3 students in BR Public School

Over half of the students indicated that they spent time online with social networking activities (See Figure 5.2). Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and other popular social networking websites were frequently mentioned. By analysing the students' responses the purposes of their use of the internet were further summarised as:

- Students want to be acknowledged by peers, especially at this age, having more attention from others made them feel good about themselves.
- Having more followers online and 'likes' for their posting made them feel more popular in their community. Students appeared to post more valuable and popular information onto the group notice board.
- In order to maintain popularity on a social network, regular updating was necessary. It required the users to have an active account.

A minority of students (9%) elected that computer-based study a priority. The mainstream choice was for social network purposes (55.2%) followed by entertainment (27.3%). There was a strong desire for popularity among their peers and regularly checking and updating their status led them into this type of activity most frequently.

5.4.2.2. Edmodo in the 'after class' space

One strategy for enhancing effective online learning is to combine the advantages of a social network platform with educational needs. For example, by transferring a language learning environment onto a social network platform such as Edmodo, could be an innovative move in language learning. On one hand, since language is a dynamic subject and requires regular input of new words and phrases, the fixed language text book is not a necessity in today's language education. The Internet is currently the fastest transmission tool in an information-sharing world. On the other hand, once students become familiar with learning language on a social network platform, this habit of regularly updating their accounts would help actualise a continuous language learning environment.



When the idea of joining a Chinese learning group on Edmodo was first introduced to the students at BR Public School many were immediately excited. By the end of the same day, nearly half the class had already joined the group, and many had already posted something on the noticeboard.

I checked my 'just initiated' Chinese learning group on Edmodo. There were already 48 students who had registered their accounts and officially became group members. Because I taught them how to pronounce their Chinese names based on their English names, they were still enthusiastic about knowing the written forms of their Chinese names. Many of them started posting questions on the public noticeboard about their Chinese names. Some of them typed Chinese greetings they just learnt from class in the way of their

own pronunciations, such as 'nǐ hǎo ma?' 'xiè xiè!')(Reflective Journal: November 6, 2013)

Table 5.2 below displays the list of initial interactions on Edmodo generated by students who had registered to be members in the Chinese language learning group.

Table 5.2: The initial interactions on Edmodo from students

Questions	Examples
(Raising curiosity)	
Greetings	Examples:
(Applying knowledge)	
Chat	Examples:
(Developing)	

interest)	<div> <div>chelsea lyons sent you a direct message:</div> <div>  <div> <div>hi miss xionghow are you.what are you doingwhat is your favourite food in china</div> </div> </div> </div>
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These data show the students used the Edmodo platform to raise their curiosity, apply knowledge and develop their interests.

The students also enjoyed taking a quiz on Edmodo. Every Chinese class included opportunities for the students to discuss, compare and learn. Normally the teaching task included new words and phrases, a background story, cultural understanding and pronunciation practice. As it was only a 30-minute lesson, to maximise the learning outcome was always a concern as little time was available for review. In order to provide practice sessions for the new vocabulary, activities were promoted through Edmodo. These activities also became a simple assessment technique for measuring student's learning. In addition, as the age group of the students was 11 to 12 years, their concentration skills and commitment to off-class study were not highly developed, and as such a short decisive quiz was decided as the best approach. The number of questions was limited to no more than 10, and the choices for each item were short and precise. In this way Edmodo was used to reinforce their memory of key words and phrases from each Chinese class. The following excerpt provides an example of the uses of the review quiz.

The first time I used the 'Quizzes' item was right after a Chinese introduction class for Stage 3 students. In the class, I played them a 10-minute video introducing some basic Chinese knowledge. They initially got some ideas about China and Chinese people. And

many of them started asking me questions about China, such as Chinese schools, Chinese festivals, Chinese food and Chinese customs. I answered each question one by one. Students got really interested to hear more about these topics. I thought I should put up a quiz on Edmodo about Chinese basic knowledge, just to check how much they have stored in their minds and how many of them would actually engage in this kind of activity. The result turned out to be surprisingly good (Reflective Journal: February 24, 2014).

Data of the students' responses to the Edmodo quizzes were collected and analysed. The next section discusses the findings from the first quiz.

5.4.2.3 Edmodo as an assessment tool

The first quiz on Edmodo was basically a class review with some extension questions. There were eight simple and clear questions about China. All questions were presented in multi-choice format to ensure ease of completion. The following figures present the findings.

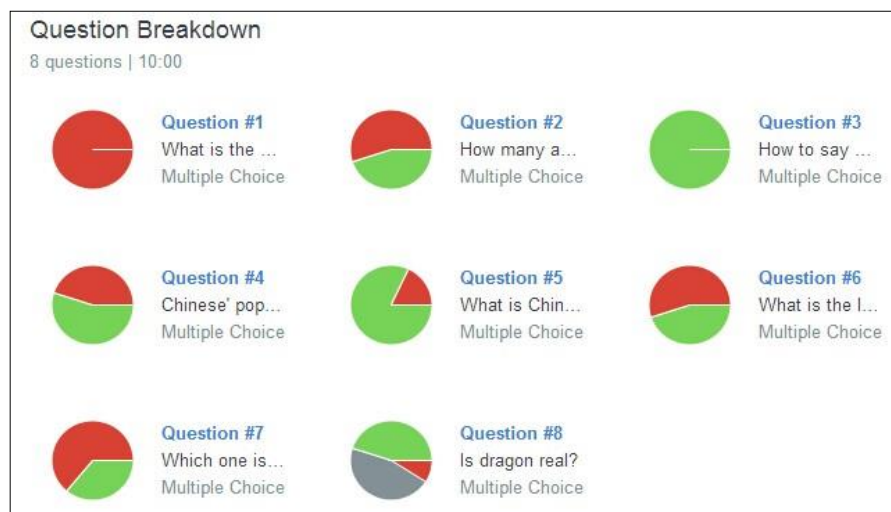


Figure 5.3: Experimental first quiz on Edmodo

The data presented in Figure 5.3 indicates, the first trial quiz was successful. There were basically three sections to the quiz. The first recorded the number of students who took the quiz and their comments. Secondly, clicking the title, would bring up a new page showing the students who had the highest scores. The third section helped to analyse students' performance with each question to provide a clear view of their command of the Chinese knowledge under review.

Positive feedback was received from the students who took the quiz and one example is provided below in Figure 5.4.



Figure 5.4: Student's positive feedback

In the week following the first Edmodo quiz, the teacher-researcher presented the students with an on-class review of the Chinese language knowledge that was practiced via Edmodo. The following entry in the teacher-researcher's journal recorded a positive finding.

After last week's quiz on Edmodo, I started this week's new class by asking them some questions that I taught them from last class. Almost everyone responded actively. When I repeated the same questions again they all provided correct answers to these questions. One student said that he had seen this question on the Edmodo quiz, so he still remembered. Students were also capable

of explaining everything they learnt from the last class. It made me happy, because it proved that Edmodo did work (Reflective Journal: March 3, 2014).

The Edmodo quiz was a success. It combined language learning review activities with a popular social networking platform to create a beneficial and interesting after-class learning environment. It was also a useful assessment strategy that enables teacher-researcher to assess students' learned knowledge in order to better plan for the following lessons.

5.4.3 Students' self-directed learning

Using Edmodo with primary school students to support Chinese language learning allowed them to embark on the discovery of flexible learning behaviours, allowing them to take advantage of the opportunity to study anywhere they had computer access and also at a time that was convenient. Following one's own learning schedule is also called self-regulated learning (SRL), and has been cited as a successful method in students' reading development (Perry, Hutchinson and Thauberger, 2008). Good readers are portrayed as highly motivated, self-regulated readers who can efficiently employ different reading strategies (Hilden and Pressley, 2007).

5.4.3.1 Self-regulated learning through Edmodo

Edmodo can be an ideal site for students to develop their potential self-learning ability for several reasons. First of all, there is not a rigid routine of traditional classroom behaviours in this Internet-based virtual learning community. This gives

students a greater degree of freedom and flexibility. Secondly, as long as students have more space and opportunity for independent thinking, they are also at greater liberty to create their own study modes and methods, a major leap forward in initiating self-learning practices. Finally, collaborative study on Edmodo enables students to work with each other and make joint efforts toward the achievement of a common goal, also an indispensable part of self-learning.

To understand how students can develop into self-regulated learners, some SRL research has investigated the effects of the classroom context in shaping students' learning behaviours in a naturalistic setting (Lombaerts, Engels and van Braak, 2009). Perry and colleagues conducted a series of studies to identify features of classroom contexts that promote or impede SRL in language learning (Perry, Hutchinson and Thauberger, 2007). Through their studies, a list of major classroom features has been identified to distinguish high- vs. low-SRL environments, including complex tasks, choice, control over challenges, instrumental support from the teachers and peers, non-threatening Evaluation Practices (EP) and opportunities to self-evaluate. The results reported that high-SRL environment should be provided to students through a variety of activities and teaching pedagogies. Other researchers have also indicated that the application of information technology is considered a useful pedagogy when aiming for high-SRL outcomes (Lau, 2012).

5.4.3.2 Edmodo to develop self-directed learning

After comparison between Chinese and Australian students, this teacher-researcher found Australian students were more capable of developing their own learning behaviours. These differences were made clear from observation and teaching experiences as the following quote from the reflective journal denotes:

As soon as I finished introducing the topic of a 'Chinese festival', many students had already put up their hands, some students even could not wait and they threw me questions right away. I have never been wrapped up with such enthusiasm in a classroom before. It suddenly made me want to find out their incentives to do so. When I was answering their questions one by one, I noticed some students started doing study on their own. One student went to look for relevant books in his cabinet; one student was drawing pictures on her little white board, and another one was searching for information on a classroom computer. Few students were still listening to what I was saying and had not decided to follow up by themselves. Nearly everyone in the classroom was busy with some different ways of continuing their explorations. (Reflective Journal: February 14, 2014)

The ability to relate prior knowledge to new knowledge was demonstrated by these Australian students. This self-awareness for knowledge association can also be regarded as a self-directed learning ability, and this caused the teacher-researcher to seek multiple ways to build connections which can be linked to relevant knowledge for facilitating their Chinese study. Since a language can best represent its national culture, history and society, there are a variety of learning references to be from which to draw.

The idea then, was to create a Chinese learning environment with the potential for further interest development in the students. Their active engagement in the Chinese classroom resulted in a decision to use Edmodo to send the students interesting and

inspiring posts relevant to Chinese and Chinese culture. Classroom observations indicated the students enjoyed music, videos and games and they tended to be more active when these elements were incorporated into teaching Chinese.

Throughout the semester, student feedback was continuously monitored every Chinese class. At the end of each Chinese class, a one question survey/questionnaire was administered to the students (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Questionnaire at the completion of class

<p style="text-align: right;">zài jiàn （再见）！xiè xiè （谢谢）！😊</p> <p>Please tell Ms Xiong, what you thought of this Chinese Class?</p> <p>A. Perfect! I loved it! B. Pretty good! C. It was just fine. D. I did not enjoy it.</p>

The same question was asked after every Chinese class and the students were very cooperative, as they were only required to tick one item to express their opinion of the class.

The aim of this continuous one semester questionnaire was to gain an understanding of the relationship between the students' interest in learning Chinese and their use of Internet technologies in class. With this in mind, the Internet and other information technologies including social network websites, digital documents, audio and video files were used in some Chinese classes, while in others they were avoided. At the end of this first semester of 2014, the questionnaire results were organised into the following table (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Questionnaire results on Chinese class (Semester 1, 2014)

	A. Perfect	B. Pretty good	C. Just fine	D. Not really
Week 1 (Internet)	56%	13%	20%	11%
Week 2 (video & music)	69%	20%	8%	3%
Week 3 (none)	31%	28%	18%	23%
Week 4 (music)	71%	12%	7%	10%
Week 5 (none)	44%	21%	23%	12%
Week 6 (Internet)	50%	19%	27%	4%
Week 7 (music)	58%	31%	3%	8%

The results from the above table show that a Chinese class using multimedia and the Internet made it more attractive to students. In weeks 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 the Internet or multimedia resources and pedagogies supported the Chinese class, and students gave high approval to those Chinese classes, with more than half choosing a ‘perfect’ response. In weeks 3 and 5 there were no digital elements in class. The pedagogy based on the teacher-researcher’s oral presentation and pen and paper exercises. The students were not as satisfied with these Chinese classes. The ‘perfect’ rankings given in weeks 3 and 5 were 31% and 44% respectively, comparatively lower than scores in the other weeks when the internet and other multimedia approaches were implemented.

Information Technology mainly includes the Internet, social media and multimedia, such as audio and video files. All learning materials presented in these formats were diverse and rich in content. For example, there are two websites called ‘Wikipedia’ and ‘Urban Dictionary’. They are both cyber-user supported, meaning anyone on the Internet can make contributions to them by creating and complementing the definition of certain words, phrases, social events, cultural symbols or other forms of texts. Unlike textbooks or the teacher’s own prepared teaching materials, social network websites can be useful resources for students to explore more opportunities for extended learning content.

5.4.3.3 Chinese textbooks lack cross cultural elements

In some classrooms, even in Australia, Chinese language teaching might be text-based instruction. Textbooks may lack cross cultural elements and an example would be if an Australian student wanted to do some study about the word ‘chūn jiē’ (春节; Spring Festival). The conventional way would be for the Chinese teacher to explain the meaning of this word to him/her. According to a textbook for learning Chinese, the definition of this word ‘chūn jiē’ (春节: Spring Festival) means ‘春节是中国最富有特色的传统节日，中国人过春节已超过 4000 多年的历史...’ (The Spring Festival is the most featured traditional festival in China. Chinese people have had a history of over 4000 years of celebrating the Spring Festival) The textbook would then follow with information about its origin, history, celebratory activities, and its influence.

The challenge is that explanations such as this in Chinese textbooks are providing the viewpoint of the first language speaker who developed the book. Its purpose is to explain the word ‘chūn jiē’ (春节: Spring Festival) within the Chinese context.

Such text-based resources written from a Chinese perspective often prove challenging for second language learners, in this instance, young beginning English speakers learning Chinese. Incorporating such Chinese texts does not aid intercultural understanding and lessons may be based on the intangible, unimaginative, abstract and are then difficult for Australian primary school students to navigate.

On some social network websites such as ‘The Free Dictionary’, the same word ‘chun jie’ (春节: Spring Festival) has been enriched with many definitions within the knowledge of uploaders. It not only talks about the basic meaning of Spring Festival, but also adds other relevant information from the perspective of non-Chinese speakers. The word ‘chun jie’ (春节: Spring Festival) as defined in ‘The Free Dictionary’ says:

Spring Festival, also known as the Chinese new year, is the most significant traditional festival in China...To some extent, its important status is equivalent to the most important Western festival – Christmas.

Linking the explanation of the Spring Festival to Christmas embodies an intercultural understanding thought pattern, and would likely help students from other backgrounds to understand Spring Festival better. An intercultural communication bridge has been built. This is one significant benefit of Internet resources supported by cyber-users and their various ideas. It also reflects the language learning strategy - L1/L2 transfer, which urges language learners to establish cross-lingual awareness when learning a second language. It can also be applied in learning about a different

culture by language learners comparing the similarities and differences in two cultures to better understand the contexts of languages.

People from all walks of life can have an array of opinions about a single cultural phenomenon, and this is how a variety of definitions can appear together on a single social network platform. It provides not just one, but a variety of aspects to present to students. It liberates their minds and stimulates them toward developing a stronger self-learning capability.

In this section enhancing the likelihood of meaningful Chinese language learning for students has suggested that text-based resources can be enhanced with the use of sites such as ‘the free dictionary’ and the Edmodo platform for shared learning through discussions. If topics are to be cooperatively identified with students, there needs to be a cautionary note cited that on-class time should not be compromised in searching for appropriate materials and that the teacher should be prepared ahead of time. In this instance the teacher-researcher chose the cultural topics of the Spring Festival and the Dragon Boat Race, and provided the students with information prior to the lesson. Students then followed their own interests using online resources with very effective outcomes.

5.4.3.4 Edmodo can extend class time

A lesson about one Chinese festival – the Dragon Boat Festival was part of the teaching program undertaken by the teacher-researcher. Before class, a written introduction about the festival along with some pictures was posted on Edmodo with the aim of encouraging students to do their own research on the topic. Students

displayed huge enthusiasm in knowing about this Chinese traditional festival as exemplified in the conversations depicted in Figure 5.5.

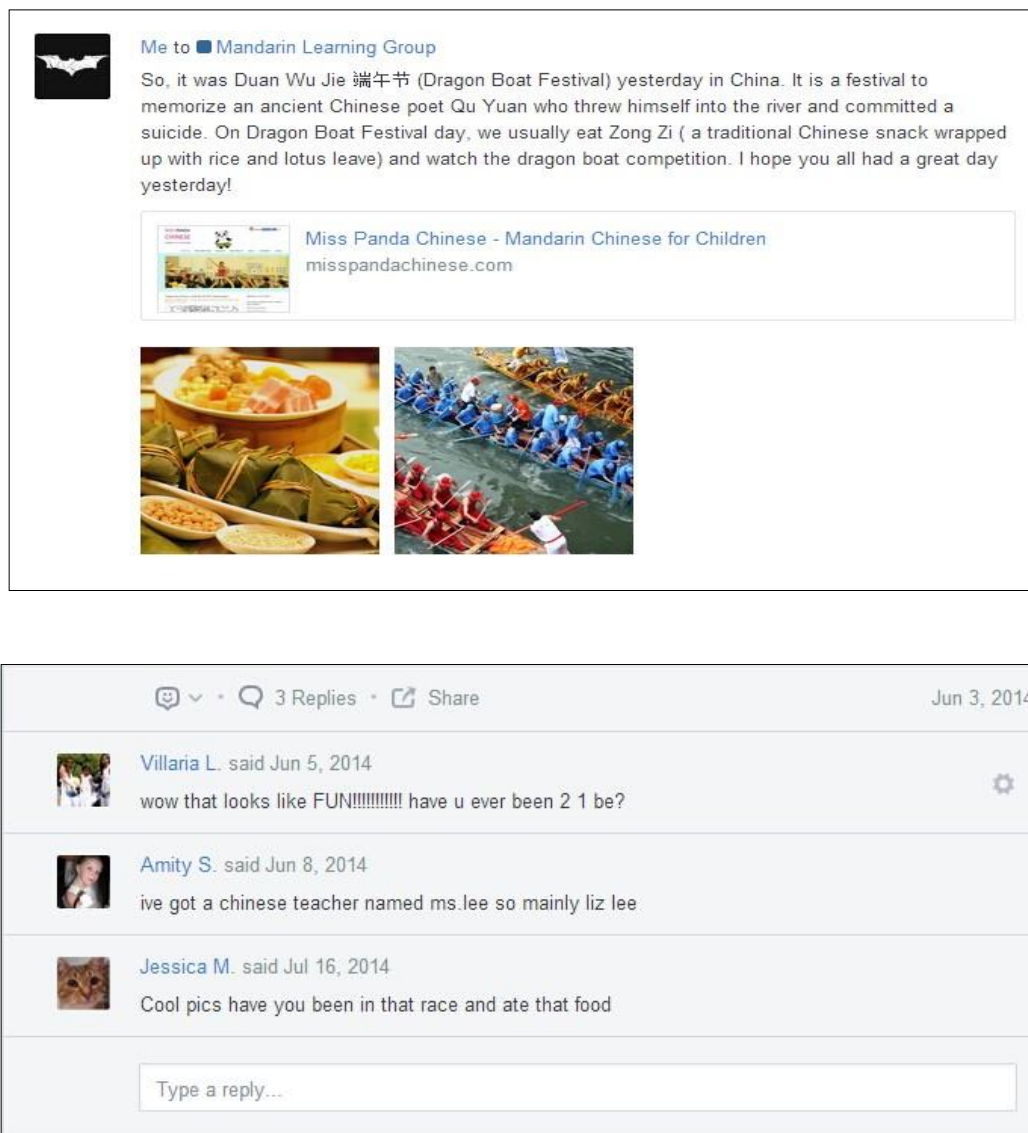


Figure 5.5: Student's interest-driven learning about Chinese culture

The following excerpt outlines the teacher-researcher's reflections on how using Edmodo allowed the students to have some background knowledge before coming to class.

Today's class topic is the Dragon Boat Festival, because it is almost time for this festival to be celebrated in China. I assume it would be a good time to introduce these Australian kids to this Chinese festival. As I learnt from previous classes that students were quite interested in seeing pictures and videos I prepared a large presentation before class. I put some Dragon Boat Festival pictures into the PowerPoint, some of them were taken by myself back in China. Also, I added stories, folk conventions, food and other festival related activities. I know students like asking me questions in class, so I automatically assumed that they would be more interested if I could offer them more diverse information ranging from different aspects of China. As there was limited Chinese class time, I decided to extend the class lesson time by using my social network platform – Edmodo. (Reflective Journal: June 4, 2014)

During this Dragon Boat Festival class, everybody was highly engaged in the content presented. The impressive thing was that the more the students heard, the more questions followed. Not only were opinions exchanged about this traditional Chinese festival, but games were played based on the knowledge of the Dragon Boat Festival. When time was up, students asked to stay a bit longer, because they were still engaged with the activities. After the reflection recorded on June 4, 2014, quoted above, it was decided to utilise Edmodo as a strategy to promote their curiosity and at the same time, develop their potential for self-directed learning.

Edmodo served as a platform embedded with language and cultural learning opportunities. Immediately after that lesson, was a good opportunity for students to receive a new post on Edmodo. It was an opportunity to reinforce their new knowledge. The post began with a sentence to emphasise the topic and capture their attention, followed by a reintroduction of the stories and activities that Chinese people would experience during the Dragon Boat Festival. These included food ‘zong zi’ (粽子: a traditional Chinese rice-pudding for Dragon Boat Festival), dragon boat racing (a traditional Chinese racing activity for Dragon Boat Festival) and other forms of celebration (singing and dancing). Links were posted which directed the students to view additional topic-related information as well as many pictures within the text, to enhance their reading skills.

Students participated and expressed what they had learnt, and this appeared to be an effective way to reinforce their knowledge. In addition to repeating their new knowledge, Edmodo was a space to add and display further relevant materials to encourage their self-directed learning development.

Initially the increased numbers of students browsing was identified, indicating the students’ interests had been captured. Some students also left comments which have been recorded below.

Student A: ‘Wow that looks like FUN!! Have you ever been to I before??’

Student B: ‘Cool pictures have you been in that race and ate that food?’

To keep their Chinese memories fresh and maintain learning continuity it was decided after each class to incorporate an Edmodo post, using different learning resources ranging from pictures, music, videos, online games, quizzes, polls and small discussions.

5.4.3.5 Stimulating interest in learning Chinese characters

After almost two terms (around six months) of Chinese language teaching and learning with Stage 3 students (aged 11 and 12 years), consideration was given to introducing the writing of Chinese characters. A post was generated with the purpose of examining student's existing knowledge and further interests for learning Chinese characters. A number of positive responses from students were posted and an excerpt is presented below in Figure 5.6.



Figure 5.6: Students actively contributing ideas to Edmodo

In conversations with previous volunteer Chinese teachers it seemed that many had tried to introduce the teaching of Chinese characters with limited or no success. After reviewing the Chinese characters and learning resources these ROSETE colleagues had designed for their students it appeared that the characters they tried teaching were too complex – for example, ‘tǒng’ (桶: bucket), ‘wǎng’ (网: net) and ‘jiàn’ (箭: arrow). Other volunteers had also introduced even more complex Hanzi, such as ‘yíng’ (赢: win).

Learning a second language is primarily for communication, especially for those beginning Australian learners. Introducing these characters would provide the teacher with an opportunity to share the interesting stories behind their meaning, however their complexity to remember and write would no doubt be a challenge for second language learners and could deliberately reduce their interest in learning Chinese characters; they would think Chinese characters are difficult to learn. Starting with such complex Chinese characters is not ideal as students may falsely believe that all characters are difficult. Students hence need to be made aware that there are similarities amongst Chinese characters and certain rules that explain their construction. Starting with some basic and simple Hanzi would boost student’s confidence, and also would be useful for scaffolding their learning towards more complex Chinese characters. The debate surrounding when to introduce Chinese Hanzi learning has been cited by Shen (2005) and Tse, Marton, Ki and Loh (2006).

With this in mind, (the need to start with some basic and simple Chinese characters), six easy Chinese characters with interesting pictures were posted. These were ‘huo’ (火: fire), ‘mu’ (木: wood), ‘ri’ (日: sun), ‘kou’ (口: mouth), ‘men’ (门: door), ‘shan’ (山: mountain).

Chinese characters are hieroglyphic symbols, originally developed as depictions of the actual objects. With social development and the need for writing speed, the traditional writing forms were gradually simplified (except in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan where traditional characters are still used). The six simple Chinese characters listed above were the most representative, and could best demonstrate the most distinctive feature of Chinese characters – hieroglyphic. Each character appeared like the ‘skeleton’, or soul of the meaning it referred to. Below is the excerpt from the teacher-researcher’s reflective journal indicating that the students engaged in the conversations around the teaching of the Chinese characters in larger numbers than was usual.

As soon as I posted the 6 simple Chinese characters picture onto Edmodo, it attracted many students to view the picture and leave comments. I did not expect this at all. Compared with usual posts, such as a simple test, class review or interesting video, this post attracted the highest rate of attention. I could tell they were happy from the comments they left below, many of them made comments like ‘Yea I did it’, ‘It was so much fun’, ‘Can I do more of the Chinese symbols?’ ... I was quite shocked and suddenly had an idea to further develop their potential for learning Chinese characters. I used to read a book on studying early age students’ creative ability especially with drawing skills. Young children are very good at copying symbols and memorizing in their own way. They prefer to see actual drawings rather than monotonous lines. All of this information enticed me to grab the chance to teach these students

Chinese characters. I wanted to see how far can they could go.

(Reflective Journal: February 26, 2014)

Although several students had posted their interest in writing Chinese characters, there were still doubts:

1. Are they copying the Chinese characters out of interest or just for fun?
2. Will they remember those Chinese characters in the long term?
3. By what method do they memorize Chinese characters?

Based on these data received through the Edmodo platform, the decision was made to teach more simple Chinese characters with some introduced through Edmodo and others reviewed using this platform. If the students had successfully learnt a certain number of these basic Chinese characters after this introductory stage, they could be taken to the next stage, progressively, with the help of Edmodo. The follow up lesson plans would be based on the results of this first step. Students expressed their interests in learning to write Chinese characters by practising and communicating their language learning with other students and the teacher-researcher (See Figure 5.7).

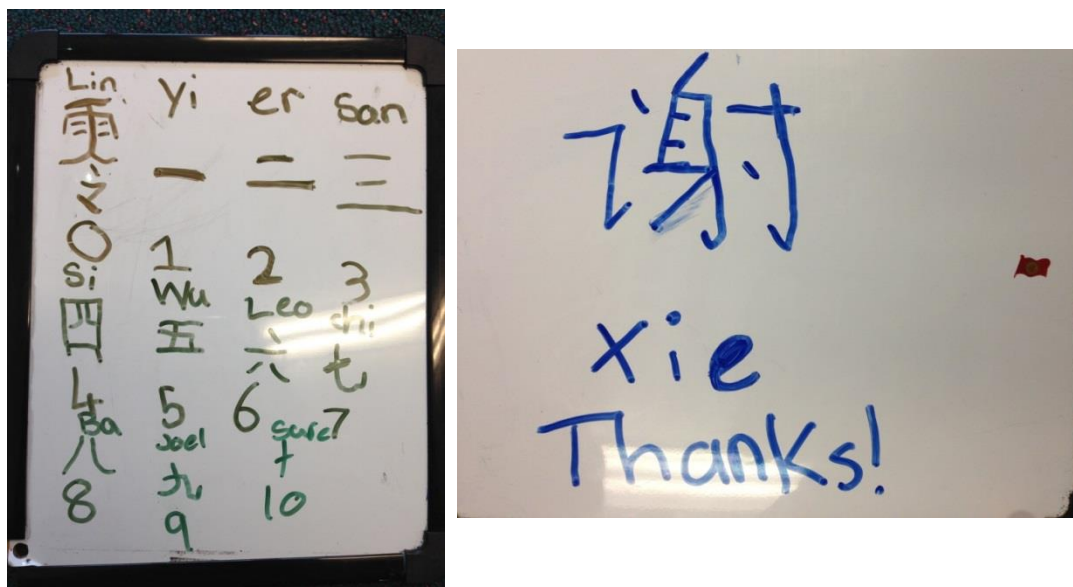


Figure 5.7: Chinese characters writing from students

5.5 Conclusion

In Chapter 4, obstacles and issues in teaching Chinese language in the classroom program have been identified which signalled the space for a new approach – Edmodo which was then introduced to the Chinese language lessons. In this chapter, significant Chinese language teaching and learning experiences with the use of the educational social media platform Edmodo have been presented. During the initial stages of teaching Chinese language with Edmodo, students' learning results have been displayed through analysing online posts and the entries in the teacher-researcher's reflective journals. Numerical data from questionnaires have also been displayed to verify the students' opinions on lessons introduced with and without online and multimedia pedagogies.

5.5.1 Findings in relation to the research question

The data presented indicate that students have displayed greater interest in learning about Chinese language and culture when online and multimedia approaches are implemented. This is in line with research reported by Prensky (2001), Hsu, Wang and Green (2013) and Rosenfeld (2007), who indicate that the use of ICTs and social media have positive effects on student learning. Teaching Chinese to Australian students with the facilitation of Edmodo has also brought progress to this volunteer teacher-researcher's Chinese teaching program.

In terms of the contributory research question: *In what ways/strategies can Edmodo be used to supplement on-class teaching and enhance students' Chinese language learning?* the findings were that with the use of Edmodo students were able to:

1. access and develop their skills in collaborative learning.
2. increase their time devoted to Chinese language learning.
3. develop the skills in self-directed learning.

5.5.2 Findings in relation to the key concepts in lesson planning

As Edmodo was introduced to support the on-class Chinese language lessons the following findings have been identified in terms of the key concepts, L1/L2 transfer, scaffolding lessons and using social media – Edmodo as a teaching tool.

5.5.2.1 L1/L2 transfer

Chinese culture was taught in parallel with the language and the teaching strategy of L1/L2 knowledge transfer was applied in the on-class lessons as well as in the

Edmodo posts. This key teaching strategy was implemented as a highly successful method as noted by researchers Cummins (2008), Holzman (2008) and Read (2008). In the examples of teaching the traditional Chinese festivals – Dragon Boat Festival and Spring Festival – introductory information about these two cultural events was provided on Edmodo and through online activities, students’ engagement in the online space motivated them to do self-study to further their knowledge of the topics. Their interest-driven learning was stimulated through and by, the supporting role of Edmodo, and they were able to learn relevant words and phrases during the journey of cultural discovery. Searching for relevant information about Chinese language and culture in their first language – English, allowed students to better understand the interrelated connections between the two languages from a metalinguistic perspective.

5.5.2.2 Scaffolding

The use of Edmodo served as a supporting role in terms of scaffolding (Berk and Winsler, 1995; Senior 2011) students’ Chinese learning. The multi-functional social media website is equipped with easy access for students to generate and exchange ideas on learning Chinese, and with the teacher-researcher’s scaffolded instructions, they were able to be motivated to develop independent learning skills such as responding and raising questions, initiating discussions and doing their own research on the class-based topics.

5.5.2.3 Social media – Edmodo as a teaching tool

In this research, strategies for teaching Chinese with Edmodo included: using intriguing topics or information on Chinese learning to capture students’ learning interests; raising thought-provoking questions to initiate discussions among students;

using ‘quizzes’ to assess students’ learning results; providing relevant and useful resources to support and extend students’ learning; and guiding students to develop their skills and dispositions in independent learning. These findings adhere to the work of Dobler (2012) who contends that classroom walls can be ‘flattened’ when Edmodo is introduced as a teaching tool as the learning space extends beyond the physical classroom.

CHAPTER 6

TEACHING CHINESE LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES WITH EDMODO

In this chapter the teaching of Chinese language with Edmodo is further explored in terms of the activities which were planned and taught to the students as they extended their knowledge and capabilities. This chapter addresses the third contributory research question: What activities can be implemented to support Chinese language learning through Edmodo?

Chapter 6 begins with the teaching episodes planned for beginning learners and presents and analyses the activities of ‘Eyes on picture’, ‘Ears on music’, ‘Attention to video’ and ‘Body with games’. The chapter then continues to those activities that relate to providing lingual opportunities and enhancing Chinese cultural knowledge aimed at more advanced students. The functions of Edmodo as the social networking platform are explained along with its role as the point of access for the online activities. Different data forms such as the reflective journal, interviews, questionnaires and online observations are presented to highlight the usefulness of the activities presented to students.

6.1 Introduction

The evidence of teaching Chinese with Edmodo in this chapter is divided into two sections – activities for the developing stage (beginning learners in either Stage 1 or 2 in NSW public schools) and those relating to the students who have made more progress and would be in Stage 3. At the developing stage the activities for students would emphasise pronunciation, spelling, listening and grammar. Having a good grounding in Chinese language at this beginning stage would serve to stimulate and enhance students' learning interest and boost their confidence as they progressed into Stage 3.

The progressive stage of teaching Chinese with Edmodo (students in Stage 3) requires students to increase their basic knowledge of China and establish a solid command of elementary Chinese words and phrases. At this stage, their interests in continuing to learn Chinese would be a crucial factor and something to be encouraged. Students with successful learning outcomes in the developing stage were to be afforded opportunities to practise situational dialogue, communicative skill development and a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and society in Stage 3 lessons.

6.2 Activities for beginning learners implementing Edmodo

Chinese language teaching activities with beginning learners in the developing stage need to be interesting, challenging and fun. The following activities were planned with the age of the students and their prior knowledge of Chinese language in mind.

6.2.1 Eyes on picture

Pictures play a significant role in student learning. Vivid and interesting images can attract students' enthusiasm to learn any subject, and this is also a crucial element in language learning. Language can be diverse, as every language is created by a certain group of people who share the same or similar living conditions in a particular region. Owing to many different social, cultural and historical reasons, the constructions and pronunciations of languages are distinctive.

Chinese language is one of the most symbolic of Asian languages. Like many other Asian languages, the forms of Chinese characters focus on their resemblance to the real world object they represent. Therefore, in teaching students how to write the Chinese character for mountain (山), as an example, the most effective way is to show them a real picture of a mountain and then introduce the Chinese character '山'.

The role of Edmodo is to help engage students in the learning process. The Internet is a rich resource for pictures, and Edmodo, like other social media websites, allows users to generate pictures they want to share with others. The students were therefore encouraged to post more pictures on Edmodo instead of words alone.

So last class we stumbled on the beautiful natural sceneries in Australia. I asked them questions like 'What is your favourite natural scenery in Australia?' and 'Where do you usually go camping and spend holidays?' Many of them told me the answers like beach, park and mountain. So here we are! I grabbed the essential word 'mountain' and decided to teach them the Chinese

writing of this word ‘shān’ (山: mountain). Considering the Chinese character ‘山’ looks like the real mountains, I wanted to let them discover the similarity through their own effort. I thought of one way. When we finished this class, I gave them a ‘homework’ task which was: “Please send your favourite pictures of mountains onto Edmodo! PS: mountain pictures that were taken from a distance please!” After a while, many students did upload their favourite pictures of mountains onto Edmodo; some of them were even comparing each other’s pictures. I was glad to see their interest in contributing into our online activities. I immediately uploaded the real Chinese character for mountains. It was a very artistic one written in Chinese traditional calligraphy style so that it looked even more like a mountain. Soon after, I read one crucial comment among all the comments from the students, ‘Ms, that Chinese symbol looks like mountains!’ (Reflective Journal: April 2, 2014)

Pictures were used as a resource in the activities several times in the Chinese character teaching lessons. In addition to the Chinese character for mountain (See Figure 6.1), there are many other Chinese characters that share a resemblance with the actual objects they represent. The idea was not simply showing pictures to them, but having them find pictures by themselves through an online platform.



Figure 6.1: The resemblance between mountains and its Chinese character

The 'picture activity' follows the sequence to introduce a topic first, and then encourage both students and teacher-researcher to post relevant pictures of the topic to Edmodo for sharing. After the brainstorming session in class, students are encouraged to discuss their understandings and interpretations of the pictures which are related to the topic. When the context and meaning of the topic are being continuously explored, more and more information can be accumulated and regenerated. Consequently, new topics can be drawn from the old topics. The connected cycle of old and new knowledge can be conducive for enhancing students' successive and continuous learning (See Figure 6.2).

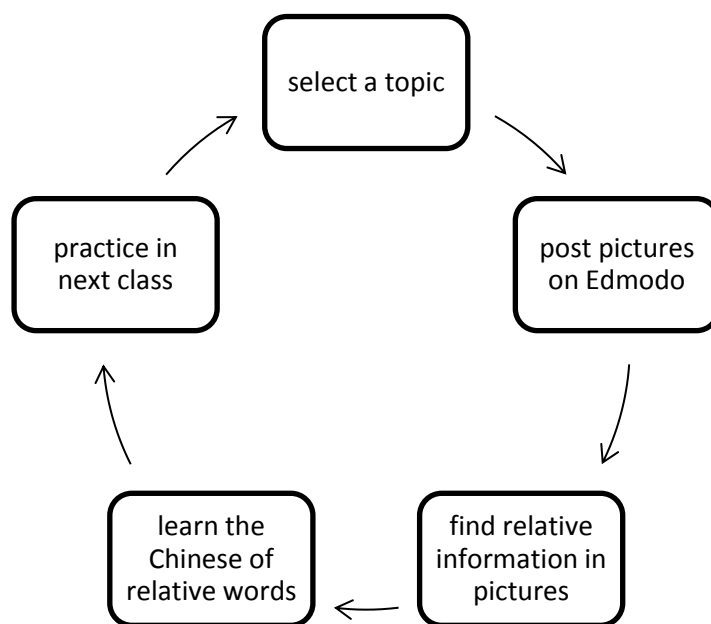


Figure 6.2: Sequence for ‘eyes on picture’ activities using Edmodo

6.2.2 Ears to music

In addition to visual learning materials, audio-based learning activities and resources for language learning are also beneficial. If pictures can help language learners to memorise characters in an entertaining way, then audio files might be significantly more helpful for language learners to practice pronunciation. Music is one audio format for language learning, and the popularity of music among Australian students could facilitate their Chinese learning in a practical way. The students appear to be fond of singing and listening to music, with some responding by wiggling and doing dance moves whilst the music is playing. If they could learn Chinese songs, then practicing their Chinese vocabulary would be a less tedious and more fun method.

Many social network websites are designed for music sharing, such as Spotify, YouTube, and SoundCloud. The main function of these websites is sharing different

genres of music amongst Internet users. Music can be forwarded, copied and shared onto other web pages for free, an economic and efficient method for bringing music – including Chinese songs – onto Edmodo.

Learning a second language (L2) is a highly valued skill in many cultures, societies and business environments. L2 acquisition is more difficult for adults compared to children, a situation that has fostered the development of numerous L2 learning aids (Kang and Williamson, 2014). Considering the difficulties of learning Chinese, which is totally different from English, music can be a practical aid to reduce students' cognitive burden. Music as a mnemonic device and the relationship between music and language, in the case of this thesis, music as an aid to learning a second language, is an area of expanding interest. This research provides class-based evidence of how these elements can be merged through social media – Edmodo.

Music is constantly regarded as an effective tool to enhance memory in real-world scenarios. The effects of music on verbal memory have been examined in laboratory and real-world contexts (Kang and Williamson, 2014). Wallace (1994) found that the presence of melodies facilitated higher recall of texts when unfamiliar ballad excerpts were sung compared to when they were spoken. Wallace (1994) postulated that melody acted to bind new text and melody together, leading to a deeper level of encoding (cited in Cason and Schon, 2012), thereby facilitating recall. More specifically, the structure of the melody could have narrowed down the range of available syllables for appropriate reconstruction, in effect providing a framework for retrieval (Cason and Schon, 2012).

Table 6.1: Observations of music in teaching in BR primary school

Scenarios	Music Applying	Analysis
Math Class	<p>Case 1: classroom teacher played a number song for students to practice math questions</p> <p>Case 2: students remembered a mathematical rule by singing a related song about this formula.</p>	The melodious music helps students to remember mathematical formula while reducing learning burden at the same time.
Break Time	Difference genres of music were played during recess and other break times. Student's reaction in the first class after break was often active.	The soothing and relaxing function of music at breaks enhances learning and promotes efficiency.
Performance Development	<p>Case 1: pop music dancing class always appeared popular among students.</p> <p>Case 2: an annual showcase performance among community support schools had a great influence and student's major performance was about music.</p>	Student's great enthusiasm for music.

Table 6.1 clearly shows that music in education has been widely adopted in BR Public School, and judging from the student's fervent reactions towards music enjoyed learning while listening to music. In other words, it could be expected that the students would accept learning activities mixed with musical elements.

The implications of the Analysis presented in (Table 6.1), were the opportunity to design activities for teaching Chinese language through songs. In addition to classroom observations of the students' appreciation for music there had been

constant requests from them to introduce, play or sing a Chinese song in class. Three classroom teachers were interviewed for advice in this regard. One of them was a senior teacher in BR Public School. All three teachers were very supportive to have music included in Chinese language learning activities. They are de-identified as Teacher A, B and C, respectively. Table 6.2 below contains the key themes identified in the interviews with some analysis.

Table 6.2: Interview with classroom teachers on Music education

Emphasis	Questions	Answers of Teachers	Analysis
Past experience	What have you done with music to teach students in and out of class?	‘I used to play a teen pop song every morning before class to cheer my students up, and they all got fairly active for the classes.’ – Teacher A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers in BR primary school supported activities incorporating music.
		‘I have constantly used music as my teaching tool in many subjects. The students become highly spirited. The only thing that worries me is that it’s a bit hard for me to find suitable songs for them. Sometimes I really want to communicate with them to see their preference but it’s difficult to find this opportunity’ – Teacher B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music had the effect of making students feel ready for learning - stimulated their study efficiency. Teachers tried various ways to find out student’s musical preferences.
		‘I am in charge of the music playing during recess, lunch and other school activities. To find out what kind of music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of time and space for

		<p>attracts them most, I used to do a survey by playing them different kinds of teen music on a showcase performance and according to their favourites, I played those singers' music during school break. Everybody got excited and even started dancing. It is like a boost for them to truly loosen up and get prepared for the following classes.' – Teacher C</p>	<p>getting to know student's preference on music.</p>
Affective engagement	<p>What were the students' reactions when you combined music into teaching subject in class? Did it work well to create a positive learning environment?</p>	<p>'Haha, wow that was pretty obvious to tell! They absolutely love it!..... Whenever the prelude of any music rises, the whole classroom just goes wild. They tend to become less tight with the music playing. Some students would even start dancing with the music. The classroom vibe would be very positive.' – Teacher A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students get engaged in class while the music is playing. ▪ Music helps to create a positive learning environment.
		<p>'Since I always use music in my class, my students are very used to it. I like playing songs related to numbers and formulas in math class. Students like memorizing math formulas with a good rhythm and they remember</p>	

		quickly while still maintaining a happy mood’. – Teacher B	
		‘Students always get engaged in class while the music is playing! It definitely helps to create a positive learning environment!’ – Teacher C	
Cognitive engagement	What about the actual effect of adding music into teaching?	‘It works well. Especially for English, math and common sense subjects, because there are loads of new vocabulary and formulas to memorize, the singing activities help to enhance their memory.’ – Teacher A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The evidence shows an affective learning environment in turn promoting cognitive recognition on knowledge. ▪ Music does have an actual effect on learning for students.
		‘Music playing definitely reduces their cognitive learning burdens and difficulties.’ – Teacher B	
		‘The effect is good, majorly because at least, repeating something you like is an actual boost for studying one subject.’ – Teacher C	

The interview with the classroom teachers revealed that music education had been common in the school, helping students learn in all subjects, especially those with considerable content to be memorised. Learning a second language is similar, with new vocabulary, phrases, and pronunciation to be memorised.

6.2.2.1 Selecting appropriate songs

In Chinese music teaching, the first step is song selection. In order to learn the students' preferences, the students needed to be consulted and there were different methods for doing this. One entailed playing songs in class and rating their popularity according to the students' responses to each song. The second would be through the Edmodo platform, where the students were told they could post any songs they liked onto the noticeboard, and could also share song links and other information such as the names of singers, or the bands. The students' most popular songs, as determined through Edmodo, were then downloaded and played in class. Once a general sense of student's favourite genre became apparent, similar Chinese songs were selected and introduced to them.

I decided to play a song called 'wǒ de péng yǒu zài nǎ lǐ' (我的朋友在哪里: where is my friend). It was actually a very random song that popped up in my mind. I used to sing this song when I was very little, and I clearly remembered that I picked it up easily from hearing it many times. My Chinese friends said so. Thus I assumed maybe it would be an easy song for the Australian students to learn (and also because of its catchy tune). Moreover, in today's class our topic was about friendship. I had already taught them some related words such as 'péng yǒu' (朋友: friend), 'yǒu qíng' (友情: friendship). So it would be an excellent opportunity to teach them a Chinese song with many words in it they already knew... After I played the song, everybody got excited; some girls even started singing along. Everybody looked very focused on the song and lyrics....They could pronounce 'péng yǒu' (朋友: friend) very

well...After this activity I had a very good impression of the success of this Chinese music activity. I do hope it works well and the actual effect is the students will remember the words. (Reflective Journal: May 1, 2014)

6.2.2.2 Singing as activities for practice

The Chinese song was played in every class after that to gauge if learning to sing a Chinese song helped memorise Chinese words and phrases while maintaining an entertaining and positive learning environment.

After 3 weeks of Chinese classes, I had played the Chinese song for 3 times. I played it again in today's class. This time was so surprising. As soon as the song began, many students already started singing. I listened to them and found it was totally correct. Then as the song went, more and more people started joining the song. Many students were repeating the lyrics using the correct, standard pronunciations... After the song finished, everybody was still singing. They can sing the song without background music now! (Reflective Journal: May 22, 2014)

This finding supports the promotion of 'Ears to music' as a successful classroom activity to introduce vocabulary and pronunciation to beginning learners. The students' responses showed that music does help to make Chinese learning easier. If suitable songs and music can be selected, it will offer the students more opportunities to learn Chinese. The social network learning site Edmodo also provided more flexible time and space for students to learn Chinese after class when the songs can

be uploaded for children to access. There was never enough time in class for them to access entertaining learning materials.

6.2.3 Attention on video

While Blake (1998) argues that multimedia technology offers new possibilities for foreign language learning, Parks, Huot, Hamers and Lemonnier (2003) note, “it is now equally incumbent on instructors to help students become proficient in its use” (p. 28). Alvermann (2004) agrees, noting that ‘new’ literacies – like those in digital media:

reflect the sociocultural, economic, and political struggles that come with reading the word – in effect, they are the literacies that adolescents need presently as citizens of a fast-changing world... (Alvermann, 2004, p.31).

Goodman (2003) argues that students must develop critical literacy to read and make sense of a broad array of media (e.g. television, radio, movies, videos, magazines, and the Internet), in addition to being able to navigate meaning through writing and reading the printed words such as a textbook. Goodman (2003) also notes that “among the most efficient strategies for teaching critical literacy is for students to create their own media” (p.4). Digital video has also been successfully applied to (among other areas) elementary education (Alvermann, 2004).

As the multiple functions of digital devices and information technology keep increasing, watching quick and convenient streaming videos online is becoming

more and more prevalent. Outdated audio files, VCDs, DVDs are no longer popular among the young generations.

Classroom observations at the school have revealed that a variety of digital devices were being widely used as resources for the activities implemented by teachers in many of their lessons. Playing videos was common in activities such as:

- Instead of playing downloaded videos and standard educational videos from formal curriculum, teachers tended to play online streaming videos more often.
- YouTube and Facebook videos were played most frequently (they are all popular social media websites with registered users and commentary features).

Sometimes, when a teacher tried to explain a new word or phrase, they looked up relevant videos on the Internet in real-time and without preparation. Students were always excited to watch a video and in the activities observed, almost all students watched attentively. The classroom was quiet as students were attentive to the video. Videos on social network websites can be assessed as ‘worth’ watching because of the credits given by large numbers of viewers. They are easily to find, and have rich content.

It was decided that no videos would be prepared before class and would instead, be searched for on the Internet during class. There were two reasons for doing so. First, every classroom in BR Public School was equipped with good Internet which connected directly onto the Smart-Board. Second, video preparation was considered

to be personally too time consuming and would interfere with decisions about how to teach students Chinese. Also, students could often offer their inspiration and opinions in class. The key point was to allow the students be the leaders in making up their minds in learning what they wanted to learn. Especially for languages learning, this point was even more significant.

Playing videos related to the Chinese language being taught was enjoyable and effective. For example, in one class the topic was ‘Chinese Food’. The students were shown many pictures of Chinese food, such as spring rolls, hotpot, BBQ pork bun and Peking roasted crispy duck. The students were interested in these pictures and asked questions about Chinese food with which they were familiar; questions such as ‘Ms, I ate Chinese food in Australia, but it doesn’t look like the ones you showed us in the pictures?’ Others were ‘Ms, what other traditional Chinese food do you know?’ and ‘Can you please tell us the way to make real Chinese food? Any recipes so my mom could cook at home for me?’ Some questions could not be answered correctly and so the Internet was brought into play. Key words were put into YouTube and many videos related to Chinese food resulted. They were then put in order from the highest to lowest number of viewings to find the most popular ones to use as the activity for the students. After the videos ended, the students selected the best videos to later be re-posted onto Edmodo. Normally, the time in one Chinese class was not sufficient for a discussion about videos and so they were later put on Edmodo so that remarks could be posted and ideas exchanged (Refer to Table 6.3).

**Table 6.3: ‘Attention on video’ activity in Chinese language learning
(first term, 2014)**

Class Time	Class Topic	Video Played	Analysis
2014 06/Feb	Counting Numbers in Chinese	<p>Beginner Conversational Chinese Numbers (0-10) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eLP3FuuEVs</p> <p>Chinese Numbers 1-100 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJ8-EpS4tL4</p>	<p>Students enjoyed the first video with its strong rhythm and easy catchy tune. This activity supported their learning to count in Chinese.</p> <p>The second video is more advanced helping students to understand the Chinese number construction rule better.</p>
2014 13/Feb	Animals	<p>Chinese for Kids learning Chinese: Chinese Zodiac Animals https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jkn2Ij566bQ</p>	<p>The topic of ‘animals’ is popular. As the 12 Chinese Zodiac animals are very symbolic to Chinese culture, this video contributed to the students’ learning of the names for animals as well as cultural understanding.</p>
2014 20/Feb	Colours	<p>Chinese for Kids: Colors Song https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JOamA9TQ0I</p> <p>DailyNoodles_American Kids learning Chinese Chinese colors of the</p>	<p>The topic ‘colours’ was actually proposed by the students. They were very interested in learning different colours in Chinese. I started from teaching them the basic major colours and then introduced the activity of the</p>

		rainbow song 彩虹歌 cǎi hóng gē https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgGevqKMBfI	rainbow colours song. Students learned to say all the colours in Chinese while singing the rainbow song.
2014 27/Feb	Chinese Food	Top 5 Chinese Street Foods https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1M0wGzBcl0 CCTV A Bite of China in 1080 HD (complete all 7 episodes) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP8dCXCbu8o Learn to say Chinese food name https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E36eeNSHOAE	Most students claimed to have eaten Chinese food in Australia. When I suggested Chinese food in Australia was not authentic, they became very interested in understand this. I showed them videos that featured popular Chinese food and common food names.
2014 03/Mar	Family	Learn Family Members in Chinese https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_aUUIHghFL4 Learn Family Members Song/ Hello Dad and Mom in Chinese! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3PQY_DC33Y	Addressing Chinese family members is very different from the English tradition. I played the first video to consolidate their basic knowledge of addressing Chinese family members, and in the second video, I used a song to enhance their memory. I reposted these two videos onto Edmodo, so students watched many times. It worked well.

Video playing became a very useful activity in this teacher-researcher's Chinese language classes. When a topic was decided for the next class, videos would be

located which featured various levels of difficulty, and were played starting with the lowest level, to ensure students were familiar with the content. Gradually students were shown more advanced videos to consolidate their knowledge. This example of scaffolding (Senior, 2011) the video content assisted the developing learners towards more progress. By reposting the videos on Edmodo students had access to continue their practice and consolidate the new knowledge. The following snapshot (Figure 6.3) was a video reposted onto Edmodo after students were taught the 12 zodiac animals in Chinese.

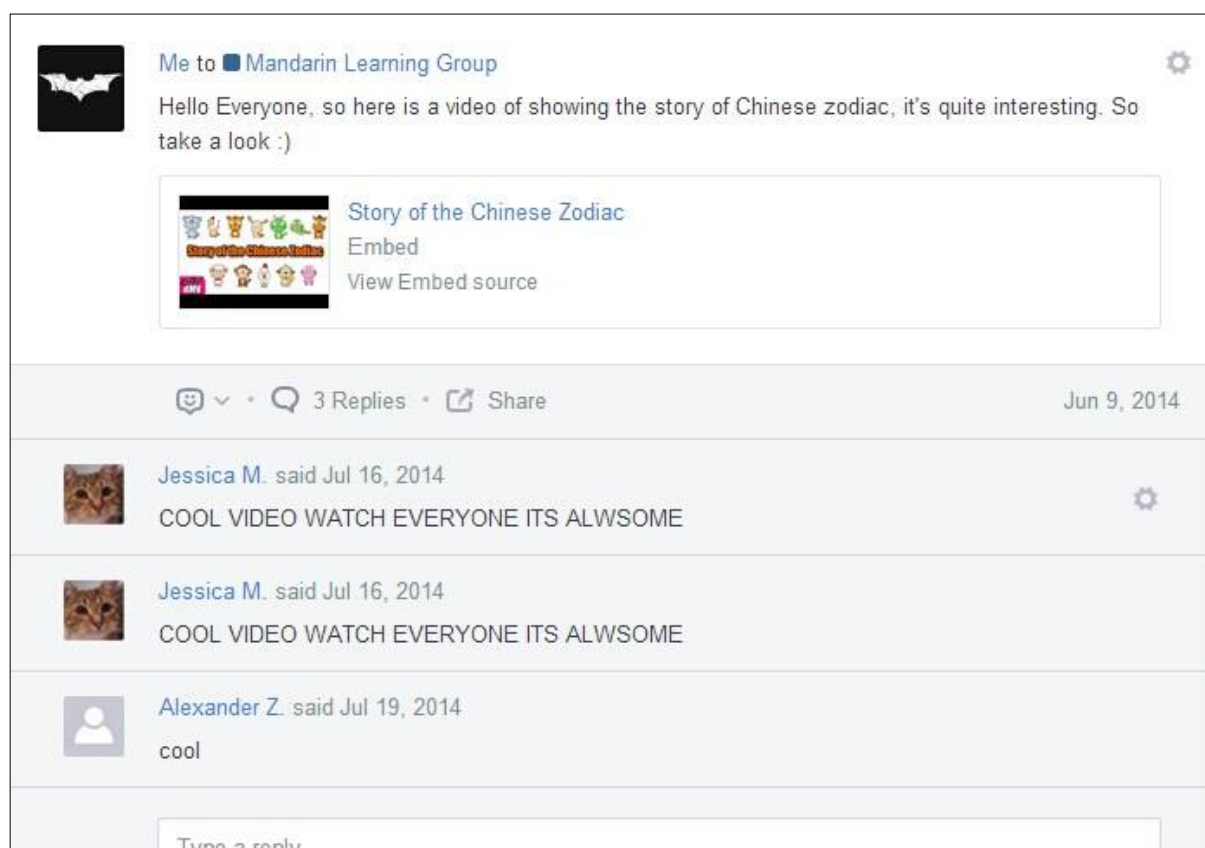


Figure 6.3: Video reposting onto Edmodo for class review

This post shows that not only did students view the video to practice their Chinese language learning, but they also recommended their peers to participate.

6.2.4 Body with games

The fourth type of activity implemented in the Chinese language lessons and which could be supported by Edmodo was games.

It was decided to administer a questionnaire to the Stage 3 students to gauge the importance of games in their spare time. The questionnaire began with the simple and straightforward question, ‘Do you like playing games?’ The results showed that 77.7% of students did like playing games. Over half of the student participants said they had been playing games quite regularly. This confirmed that Chinese language lessons incorporating game activities would be well received.

The use of games in education has long been a focus of researchers. The potential of gaming to develop skills associated with learning has been examined (Aldrich, 2009; Prensky, 2001). Influenced by this work, computer assisted language learning (CALL) researchers have investigated the potential of computer games as potential activities for language learning (Ang and Zaphiris, 2008). The presence of network communication tools provides plentiful opportunities for purposeful real-time interaction involving target language use and reuse (Peterson, 2010). The reduction in social context cues made possible by the online nature of games and learner-centered interaction, coupled with the presence of personal avatars may enhance participation and engagement (Garcia-Carbonell, Rising, Montero and Watts, 2001).

Apart from digital computer games, many other game activities, such as physical games, music games and board games, can also enhance second language learning.

Such on-class game activities present students with scenarios filled with the opportunities for practising the target language.

Observations at BR Public School confirmed that many classroom teachers incorporated activities such as digital games in class to teach students across many different subject areas. Those games were mainly sourced from the Internet where educational websites can be located that specialise in designing games for student learning.

Some games were developed by the classroom teachers specifically for language learning. These were popular activities that required students to physically work together. Not only did students enjoy these physical activities but they also had opportunities for practice and memorisation of the words and phrases in the target language.

Three types of game activities were implemented in the Chinese language classes, each based on the class topic and considered the age and development of the students.

6.2.4.1 Card Games

After learning numbers in Chinese, some game activities were chosen to reinforce the students' new vocabulary. The students were provided with options. The first was computer apps and also a self-designed activity: think of a number game. Finally, poker cards were chosen. From a full deck of playing cards, a student volunteer randomly chose two cards, and proceeded to correctly pronounce the numbers displayed on the cards. The student was then asked to make a calculation using these

two numbers – either plus, minus, multiply or divide. The student would perform a mental calculation and then provide the answer to the class in Chinese. The students were then divided to compete against each other in pairs. The students on the winning team received rewards.

This activity provided many opportunities for the volunteer student and the whole class to practice pronouncing the numbers being learnt. The process was one of building a bridge between the original language and the target language, and by combining language and math through this activity, the students responded positively in their participation.

The students introduced other games they played with cards, many of which were also excellent games for practicing numbers in Chinese. The rules for many card games were posted on Edmodo. Other websites were also discovered that provided online card games. Students could choose to join and play with others – the main rule being the requirement to speak the numbers in Chinese instead of English.

6.2.4.2 Physical games

When the need arises Australian students are encouraged to move from their set desks and walk around in class, and are much more active than Chinese students. Being active in this way enables them to be more engaged and efficient in their learning. For language learning, a balanced combination of body gestures and using the five senses can provide opportunities for successful language learning.

After the students learnt seven basic colours, a game activity was introduced called ‘traffic lights’. Some students would play the roles of pedestrians trying to cross the

road, and one student would be the traffic director deciding what colour the light would be. When the traffic director said ‘hong deng’ (红灯: red light), all the pedestrians had to stop moving and stand where they were; when he/she said ‘lv deng’ (绿灯: green light), the pedestrians were to move forward; and when the traffic director announced ‘huang deng’ (黄灯: yellow light), everybody waved their hands.

When the students were introduced to the rules of this game, that they were to be physically active, they became excited to join in this activity. Before starting the game, it was made certain that every student could understand and pronounce these three basic colours in Chinese. The game was a success and the students indulged in a positive learning environment involving physical movement. Everyone had an opportunity to practice pronunciation and to give and receive orders in Chinese. This game was played in class several times and the students’ memory of the words used in the game remained current. This type of activity, where students needed to be involved in physical movements was adapted to practice other Chinese vocabulary .

6.4.2.3 Internet Games

Games over the Internet can have a very large group of players. Many students talked about the games they liked to play at home on the Internet. The Internet connects users to accomplish the same task together. It requires a united effort and clear instructions to play the game successfully. Students’ posts often appeared on Edmodo outlining the games they were currently playing (See Figure 6.4).

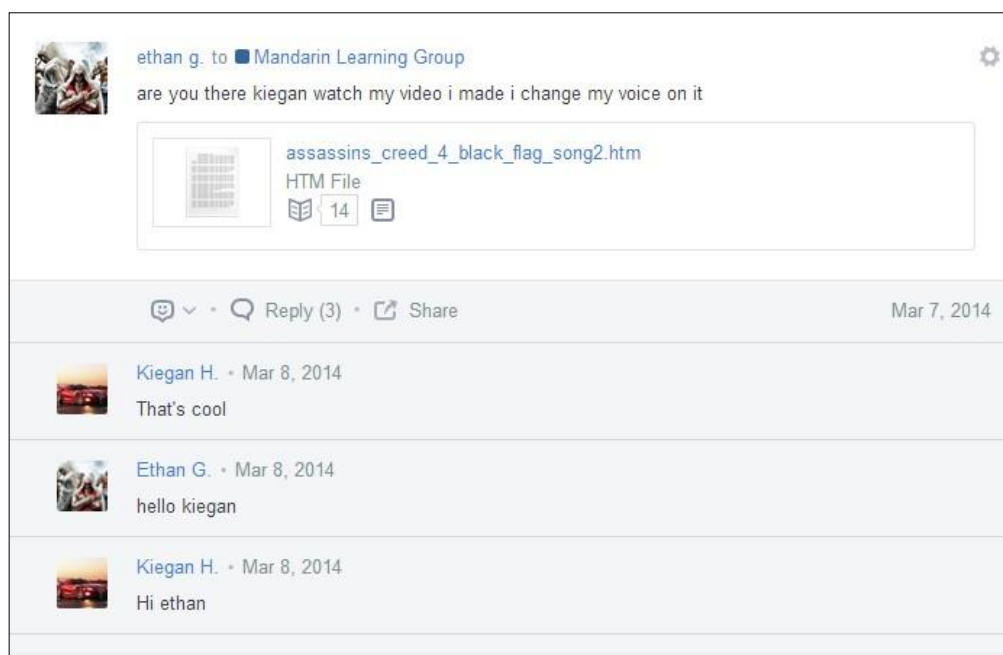


Figure 6.4: Student's game enthusiasm on Edmodo

In some popular International game venues, players from different countries around the world can communicate with each other in different languages, and strategic cooperation in each game is essential. This opens an excellent platform for these students to practice Chinese.

There is a famous Chinese game called ‘Gobang’/ ‘Five-in-a-row’. It is a board game (See Figure 6.5) with simple rules: two people can play at the same time; each person chooses either white or black; players take turns, making one move at a time; the player who manages to place five pieces in a row is the winner.

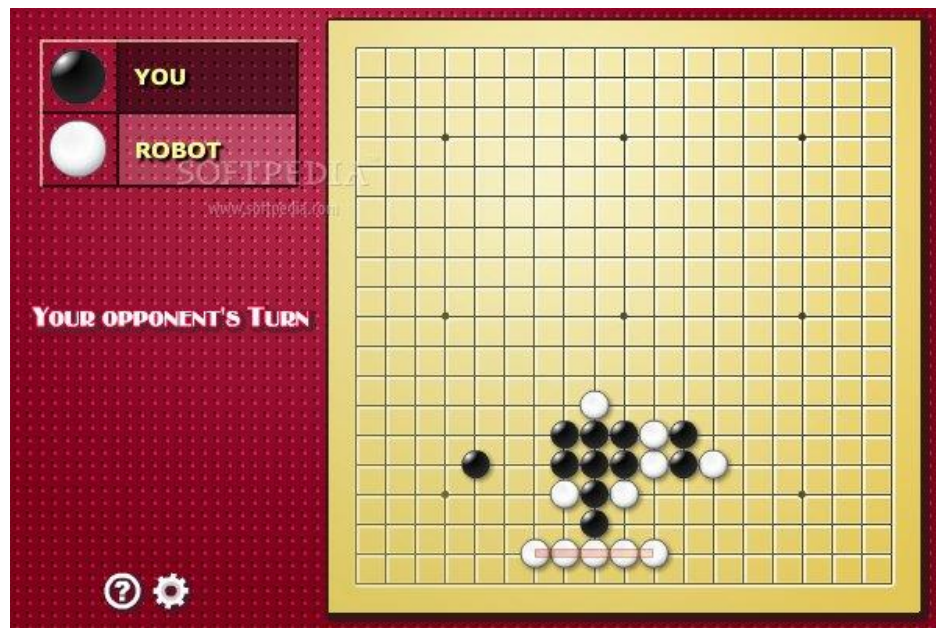


Figure 6.5: The Internet version of Gobang (Five-in-a-row)

Source: (<http://games.softpedia.com/get/Freeware-Games/Multiplayer-Five-in-a-Row.shtml>)

The students were shown an Internet version of this game on the smart-board, and the rules were explained. Nearly every student volunteered to play. Since the students had learnt the four directions and colours in Chinese, another rule was added to the activity – players could only speak Chinese while they were playing. The student who spoke any English word would lose the game.

As recorded in the reflective journal, the most frequently used words and phrases in Chinese that were used when playing ‘Gobang’ are displayed numerically in Table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4: Format (Colour + Direction) for learning Chinese words through the online game 'Gobang'

1. 'Hei Shang' (黑上: Black Up)
2. 'Hei Xia' (黑下: Black Down)
3. 'Hei Zuo' (黑左: Black Left)
4. 'Hei You' (黑右: Black Right)
5. 'Bai Shang' (白上: White Up)
6. 'Bai Xia' (白下: White Down)

Many similar Internet games were also used for reviewing and practising new Chinese vocabulary. The criterion for choosing game activities were: easy to play and understand, catchy, short, entertaining, strategic and challenging. Overall the key features for an engaging Internet game to support Chinese language learning were: short and repetitive.

6.3 Activities for more advanced learners implementing Edmodo

This section outlines the age-appropriate activities implemented to support Chinese language learning for those students with basic Chinese language.

6.3.1 Creating lingual opportunities for Chinese practice

Over the course of the eighteen months of this research the students were observed to be progressing well with their Chinese language learning. The feedback from students themselves was mostly quite encouraging. Students enjoyed speaking Chinese with friends, family and the teacher-researcher. They expressed their interests in continuing learning Chinese and Chinese knowledge.

The following images (Figure 6.6) are excerpts from students' written feedback expressing their fondness for learning Chinese.

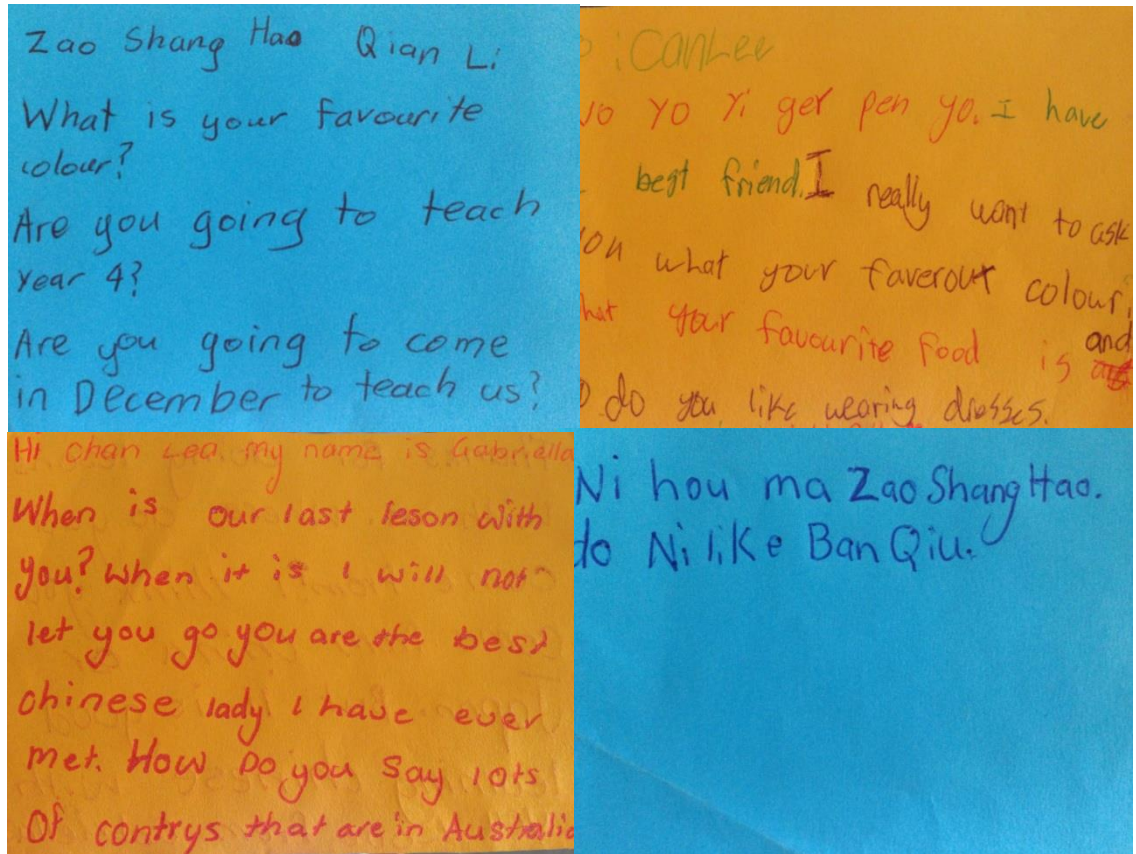


Figure 6.6: Feedback from students in BR primary school

These screen shots of student comments and work samples, provide evidence that the teacher-researcher has established a positive rapport with the students, in no small part due to the Chinese language program being enjoyed by the students. The addition of Edmodo is a central pillar of this program.

In Smythe and Neufeld's (2010) research 'Podcast Time: Negotiating Digital Literacies and Communities of Learning in a Middle Years ELL classroom', in the context of teaching English to non-English speakers, they concluded that building digital literacy projects can help teachers create classroom learning communities that

critically engage and respond to the social worlds of English-language learners. A podcast is one of several Web 2.0 digital social-networking tools, including blogs, YouTube, and Facebook, that provide platforms for creation and sharing of user-generated content, often by means of portable media players (Smythe and Neufeld, 2010). Some schools have recognised that students' out-of-school lives are infused with technologies and have started incorporating these applications into students' classroom lives to engage them in learning new content (Lee, McLoughlin and Chan, 2008).

Several activities were designed for creating Chinese practice environments for the students, both in class and off-class. In class, students were encouraged to use their basic Chinese knowledge in communicative activities. For example, they used to say 'Good morning, Ms Xiong!' in English before learning basic greetings in Chinese. In the beginning Chinese language classes the students became accustomed to the basic greeting, *nǐ hǎo* (你好: Hello). As the students progressed with their success in Chinese language greetings a more advanced communicative greeting activity was introduced. The students were guided (scaffolded) through what and how to say an advanced greeting. Once the students overcame initial hesitation and shyness, they began consistently greeting the teacher-researcher in Chinese, saying 'Zao Shang Hao, Xiong Lao Shi' (早上好, 熊老师: Good morning, Ms Xiong). They were also encouraged to use other common words and phrases used daily with more advanced and longer sentence structures. The following table is a summary of the 'daily words and sentences' replaced by Chinese during the language lessons with Stage 3 students (See Table 6.5).

Table 6.5: ‘Daily words and sentences’ in Chinese class

	Basic English	Progressive Stage (In Chinese)
Greetings	Hello!	nǐ hǎo (你好: Hello)
	Good morning!	zǎo shàng hǎo (早上好: Good morning!)
	Good afternoon!	xià wǔ hǎo (下午好: Good afternoon!)
Honorific	Thanks! Thank you!	xiè xiè (谢谢: Thanks! Thank you!)
	Sorry! Excuse me!	duì bù qǐ (对不起: Dui Bu Qi!)
	No problem! No worries!	méi guān xi (没关系: Mei Guan Xi!)
	Please.....	qǐng (请: please...)
	Good Bye!	zài jiàn (再见: Goodbye!)

In addition to the communicative opportunities to practice Chinese language in class, the other practice ground was the Internet.

6.3.1.1 Edmodo as a space for all to participate

The power of social network websites can never be underestimated in terms of engaging and directing students’ virtual communication. The students enjoyed spending time talking to their peers after school on Edmodo as it had become a common practice with many of them. They loved sharing pictures, discussing topics, asking questions and most importantly, using Chinese in different situations. Many students were proud to demonstrate the number of Chinese words they had learnt in class. Extroverted students were engaged in class and on Edmodo, and for the introverted ones, the Edmodo platform constituted an environment to open their hearts and speak what they wanted to say to their peers. One example is of quiet boy

who seldom spoke in Chinese class. He merely interacted with the others. It created the impression that he did not enjoy the class or learning Chinese. Surprisingly, he presented a different image on Edmodo, and since registering and joining the class Edmodo Chinese learning community, he became the most active member. He raised questions about more Chinese words, shared pictures of his life, and interacted with his peers in Chinese. There were other similar cases. For these students, shifting the practice arena from the traditional classroom to an online virtual community was of benefit to them. Efforts were made to accommodate all the students in the Edmodo conversations ensuring there was room for the exercise of individual strengths and potentials.

6.3.1.2 Edmodo functions – discussion, comment and share

Some distinct functions of Edmodo created for developing more Chinese practice opportunities are ‘discussion’, ‘comment’ and ‘share’. Compared with traditional classroom Chinese practice, Edmodo offered a wider spectrum of self-practice spaces. With guidance, the students were free to review, share, practice and learn new Chinese words and about Chinese culture in a variety of ways. In the age of Big Data (incredibly large datasets), the Internet is by far the most advanced resource search base; with simple tap and click, the desired information arrives quickly and precisely. It connects students, and accommodates information exchange at the same time.

The Chinese language practice sessions on Edmodo progressed well and the students were willing to engage with this online learning experience. By analysing the students’ posts the most favoured activities on Edmodo were *discussions* followed by *questions and answers*. The topics on Edmodo engaging the students in Stage 3

varied from the Chinese language itself to Chinese culture. Sometimes after seeing an appealing video in class, there would be ongoing interaction and feedback from students in the days after the on-class activity. Some interest-driven students searched and collected more references, to continue their learning as evidenced in the snapshot labelled Figure 6.7 below.

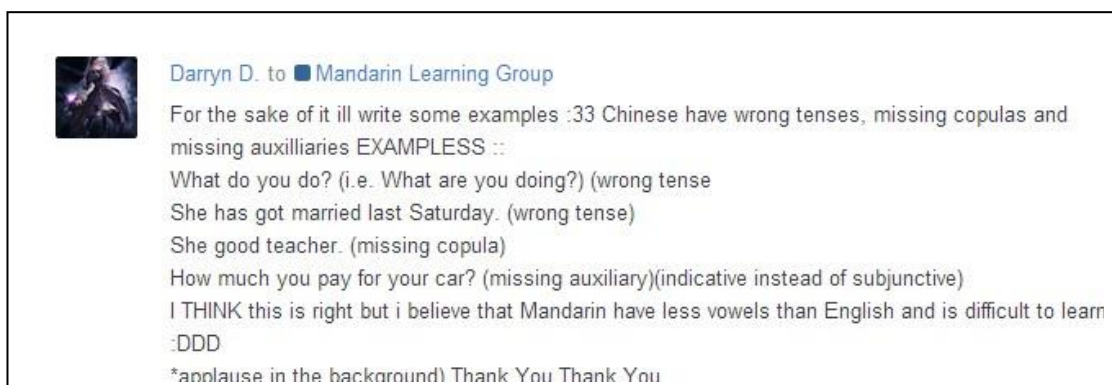


Figure 6.7: Student's initiative Chinese learning cases on Edmodo (case one)

Case analysis (see Figure 6.7): This student was similar to many others. They were industrious and showed initiative. This post shows the student has a strong interest in learning Chinese. After he had a good grasp of the Chinese knowledge taught during the initiatory stage, he started searching for more advanced Chinese words and phrases on the Internet on those websites recommended for browsing by a post on Edmodo. After he found some useful and practical Chinese words, phrases and sentences, he excerpted the best parts and shared them on the Edmodo public page for other students' viewing. The more advanced words, phrases and sentences were complex in structure, not only in writing but also pronunciation. After he posted these onto the Edmodo front page, other students instantly reposted the content and commented, giving credits to the developing Chinese study materials. In a subsequent class, several students spoke (in Chinese in front of the class) some of

those words and phrases from this post, effectively generating a practice session for themselves and other students.

The following post is another revealing excerpt of evidence confirming students became engaged with Chinese language learning through Edmodo.

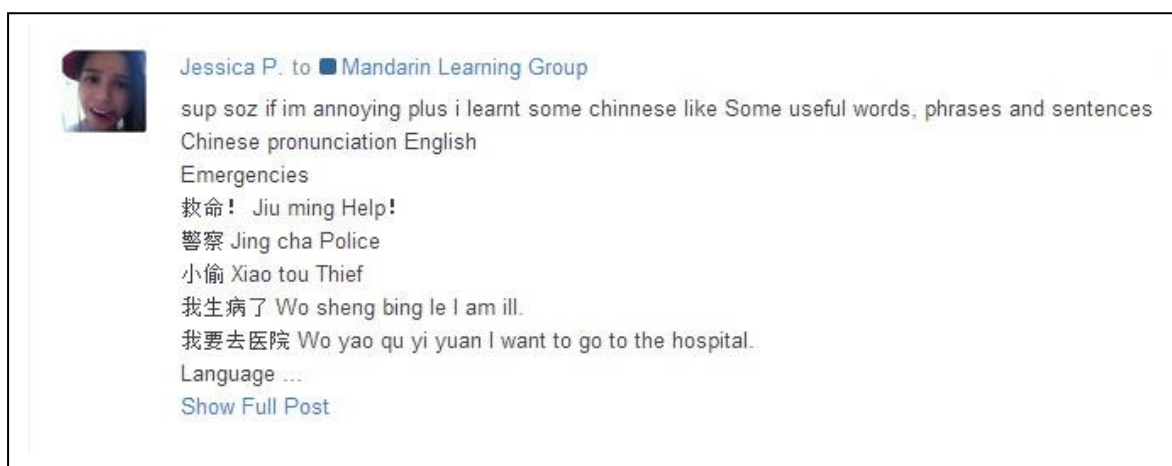


Figure 6.8: Student's initiative Chinese learning cases on Edmodo (case two)

Case analysis (see Figure 6.8): Most students in Stage 3 showed initiative and industry. The student who posted this item showed great interest in learning Chinese. After she had a good command of the Chinese knowledge learned during the introductory lessons, this student also started searching for more advanced Chinese words and phrases on the Internet and recommended websites. After locating some useful and practical Chinese words, phrases and sentences she selected some to share on the Edmodo public page for everybody's viewing. As with the example presented in the discussion of Figure 6.6, many students within the class participated and shared their learning of new Chinese vocabulary and sentences explored through Edmodo.

6.3.1.3 Advantage of additional time

Students participating in this research could only be taught Chinese language within the dedicated class time which was limited to 30-40 minutes per week. It was pleasing to observe that students were able to take advantage of the Internet and Edmodo to explore and record additional useful content for their own learning but also for sharing with other students.

As a voluntary Chinese teacher-researcher the goal was to teach local Australian students some basic Chinese language and further to engage them with some Chinese cultural knowledge and activities. Due to the features of the ROSETE program and school timetables, some inevitable time and space restrictions impacted on the amount of content that could be covered with the students each week. To sustain uninterrupted learning progress, and to stimulate students' success and interest in continuing to learn the Chinese language, the booming social networking websites can support the classroom teacher's best efforts. Since Edmodo is a well-known educational social media, the opportunity to use it with students on a daily basis is available for all.

6.3.2 Enhancing Chinese cultural knowledge teaching

The significant role of highlighting intercultural understanding during language teaching has long been regarded as indispensable. In 1986 it was reported that the term 'cultural studies' was not widely used in foreign language teaching. Since then, attention to the cultural dimension has much increased in this and other disciplines, and in the last two decades, an increasing number of people working in foreign or second language education have developed their teaching theories and applications

under the umbrella of teaching culture for intercultural competence (Byram and Feng, 2004). Dong (2009) refers to culture as the behaviour and interactions of people in a particular society that become transmitted. Accordingly, cultural awareness is described as a ‘sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behaviour on language use and communication’ (Dong, 2009, p.23). Thus language teaching must acknowledge intercultural understanding and include activities in order to engage students with the benefits of intercultural understanding. In other words, learners’ perceptions towards a language can be changed in accordance with their development of a positive cultural understanding and intercultural awareness connected to the foreign language being taught.

6.3.2.1 Aiming to increase intercultural understanding

During the initial stages of the Chinese language lessons with Stage 3 students, more focus was placed on the Chinese language itself. Occasionally background stories would be introduced when associated with the vocabulary being introduced. The idea was to have students gain the basic knowledge of Chinese language in order to begin some basic communication. In the later Chinese teaching stage, there was more emphasis on encouraging students to develop enthusiasm for their own interest-driven Chinese language learning. One method was to impart new knowledge based on their existing knowledge; the other was to share more Chinese cultural knowledge and current information taking account of their language ability. Evidence showed enhancing Chinese cultural knowledge teaching would in return help Chinese language learning (Dong 2009).

As mentioned in Chapter 4.3.3 the Australian students' impressions of Chinese culture were mired in older images and stereotypes. Notable icons such as the Great Wall, TianAn Gate, Yellow River, Chinese Kung-Fu, Giant Panda, Jacky Chan and BBQ pork buns were most frequently mentioned by students. There was an opportunity to extend their existing knowledge beyond these commonly known icons. The diversity of modern Chinese culture was introduced, explained and represented through various media, for students to experience. As modern Chinese culture is evolving rapidly, it was decided to not only discuss this in class, but to also introduce representative Internet resources circulated via Edmodo. On the one hand, it was thought that the abundant relevant information from the Internet could be reduced and shared quickly via Edmodo, and on the other, knowledge attained through students' own efforts is generally more solidly recalled.

6.3.2.2 Students mis/understandings of China and Chinese popular culture

Listening to music, singing songs and dancing are all popular activities with most people in all cultures. The following excerpt from the teacher-researcher's reflective journal indicates that students in this case study had limited Chinese cultural understanding.

It was a Chinese culture class. Most students in my class were very fond of singing, and they always asked me to play some Chinese songs. I enquired about their experiences of listening to Chinese music. All the answers related to the Chinese translation of English songs, like the Chinese versions of 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' and 'Happy New Year'. However student knew many Korean and

Japanese songs but not specific Chinese ones. One student even asked me that if all the good Chinese songs were adapted from English ones. It reminded me of the limited access they had to Chinese popular music and culture. (Reflective Journal: August 13, 2014)

This cultural misunderstanding could be the result of several factors. As discussed in Chapter 4, modern Chinese cultural products (movies, videos and songs) do not seem to have been as widely distributed as those from Japan and Korea around the world. In addition the avenues of communication for Chinese modern culture have historically been silenced. Many local radical leftists in Australia have dispersed unfavourable publicity towards China. Mostly regarding social conditions in China this propaganda has been detrimental to conveying a real and healthy image of modern China to Australians. As a Chinese teacher, the responsibility of teaching Chinese culture was no less than teaching the language itself.

The strategy of combining classroom teaching with Edmodo continued. A lesson focussing on Chinese culture to promote cultural awareness was planned and delivered each fortnight. The students were presented with the classics and latest in Chinese culture, ranging from videos and music to festivals and traditions. A list of the Chinese cultural topics was developed to guide the teaching content in term 4. The students' responses were recorded subjectively by the teacher-researchers on-class observations during each Chinese class. The results appear in the following table (See Table 6.6).

Table 6.6: Chinese cultural class topics and students' responses
(Term 4, 2014)

Time	Topic	Positive Reaction	Medium Reaction	Little Reaction
September 17	The Chinese version of the singing contest 'The Voice'	✓		
October 1	Popular Chinese cartoon 'Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf'		✓	
October 15	Life and study in Chinese Public School (primary and high school)	✓		
October 29	Chinese national minorities			✓
November 5	Various eating preferences in different parts of China	✓		

***Reaction level was based on a comprehensive observation of students' questions, classroom atmosphere, teacher's attention and the whole class's engagement**

The results show that students were engaged in learning about the practical and popular side of Chinese culture, with issues relating to school life, eating habits and entertainment being more attractive to them. In addition to learning Chinese language, education about Chinese culture was equally important if these students were to gain intercultural understanding. Although the focus was on the cultural content, students began to enquire about and 'pick up' new vocabulary. For example,

in a lesson that featured ‘various eating preferences in different parts of China’, one student was keen to find out about the eating preferences in this teacher-researcher’s hometown (Ningbo, in southeast China). The students were then shown different pictures of the fish and other ocean creatures commonly eaten in Ningbo. They had previously learnt the Chinese word for ‘fish’ and some then made the connection to the fishing industry in Ningbo and asked how to say ‘fishery’ in Chinese.

This lesson was planned as one to develop cultural understanding but the Chinese language element emerged through the discussions and interests of the students. The students were then taught ‘yu chang’ (渔场: fishery), formed by adding one character after ‘Yu’ (鱼: fish). Students started practising the new word, and one student said ‘Ms Xiong, I like learning new Chinese words in this way, sometimes I can remember the old words.’ During the Chinese culture lessons, students not only learned about classic and modern Chinese culture, but also recalled prior knowledge and increased new knowledge and vocabulary.

Subsequent to the Chinese cultural understanding lessons the students questions and answers were posted on Edmodo. Students read these posts, reviewing the information given in class. They were also free to post whatever they thought would be related to the topic. Often students who were silent in class participated regularly in the Edmodo space. Table 6.7 below lists the questions and related Chinese words for each topic that students posted on Edmodo.

Table 6.7: Questions and Chinese words related to each Chinese cultural topic

Topic	Questions from students	Suggested related words and phrases
The Chinese version of the singing contest ‘The Voice’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What is the difference between Chinese ‘The Voice’ and Australian one? – What is the popular music like in China? 	<p>‘hǎo shēng yīn’ (好声音: good voice)</p> <p>‘yáo gǔn’ (摇滚: Rock n’ Roll)</p> <p>‘chàng gē’ (唱歌: singing)</p> <p>‘fēn sī’ (粉丝: fans)</p> <p>‘dǎo shī’ (导师: tutor)</p>
Popular Chinese cartoon ‘Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are there any other Chinese cartoons? – Are foreign cartoons popular in China? 	<p>‘dòng huà piàn’ (动画片: cartoon shows)</p> <p>‘cháo’ (潮: popular)</p> <p>‘màn huà’ (漫画: Cartoon)</p>
Life and study in Chinese public school (primary and high school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What were your primary and high school like, Ms Xiong? 	<p>‘xué xiào’ (学校: school)</p> <p>‘xiǎo xué’ (小学: primary school)</p> <p>‘gāo zhōng’ (高中: high school)</p> <p>‘shàng kè’ (上课: have class)</p> <p>‘xià kè’ (下课: off class)</p>
Chinese national minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Why are there so many national minorities in China? – What is the largest Chinese nationality called? 	<p>‘mín zú’ (民族: nationality)</p> <p>‘shǎo shù de’ (少数的: minor)</p> <p>‘hàn zú’ (汉族: the Han nationality)</p> <p>‘wǔ shí liù gè mín zú’ (五十六个民族: 56 national minorities)</p>
Various eating preferences in different parts of China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What do you eat mostly in your hometown, Ms Xiong? – Why are the eating habits so different in China? 	<p>‘hǎi xiān’ (海鲜: seafood)</p> <p>‘hǎi yáng’ (海洋: sea, ocean)</p> <p>‘yú chǎng’ (渔场: fishery)</p> <p>‘chī’ (吃: eat)</p>

Teaching Australian students about Chinese culture helped to broaden their understandings of current modern-day China. The students came to know more about the current situation, ‘what’s going on’ in China. This expanded and consolidated their cultural understanding and associated Chinese vocabulary. Edmodo played an efficient and effective role in this process. It connected students, helped to create learning material to be shared within the student group linked by a common learning purpose.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the third contributory research question: What activities can be implemented to support Chinese language learning through Edmodo? The activities planned and implemented to the students changed as they progressed from the basic beginning level, to a more advanced level. Section 6.2 presented those activities which supported the teaching of basic Chinese vocabulary and characters, whilst Section 6.3 featured those activities scaffolded for students who were further progressed. In each section the role of Edmodo has been explained and justified. Data from the teacher-researcher’s reflective journal and excerpts from the Edmodo online conversations were analysed and the following findings emerged.

6.4.1 Lesson content

In the lessons that were designed for the beginning learners, the activities were planned around content which included numbers, greetings, animals, colours and hobbies. For more advanced learners the content was linked to lessons to engage

students' cultural understanding of China and Chinese people. These comprised social traditions, festivals and Chinese classic and modern popular culture.

6.4.2 The role of Edmodo

Edmodo was used to support Chinese language learning in the following ways:

- Knowledge imparted in the classroom was put up on Edmodo along with additional learning materials for students to review.
- Students were invited to post any comments, ideas or resources related to Chinese learning on the public page.
- They practiced Chinese language online through reposting, sharing, forwarding and discussing, as Edmodo enabled students to access resources at any time.
- The process of knowledge building was clearly evident to the students as through Edmodo, their knowledge was stored and accumulated on the site.

6.4.3 How Edmodo supported Chinese language activities

With beginning learners, the teacher-researcher implemented the activities of 'eyes on pictures'; 'ears to music'; 'attention to video' and 'body with games'. The purpose was to engage students' learning through multi-sensory activities. Edmodo played a supportive role in the teaching of each of these activities.

6.4.3.1 Eyes on pictures

Edmodo supported the teaching of the Chinese character for mountain (山). Students and the teacher-researcher searched for and uploaded visual imagery of mountains until one student connected one of the pictures to the Hanzi. This finding is supported by the notion of the ‘online learning community’ (Cheung, Chiu and Lee, 2010) where learning can be shared across the group to the benefit of all.

6.4.3.2 Ears to music

Activities to assist students’ pronunciation were developed on-class and supported off-class through Edmodo. Songs were uploaded and students were able to access these in the flexible time and space site provided by Edmodo. The value of using L2 resources to support language learning is expressed by (Kang and Williamson, 2014) and proved successful in this research.

6.4.3.3 Attention on video

Students were shown a number of videos in class and these were subsequently uploaded onto Edmodo. The posts made by the students provide evidence that they re-watched the videos initially presented in class and also encouraged their peers to do so. In this way Edmodo positively supported the classroom audio-visual lessons. These findings support the research by Alvermann (2004) who found elementary school students responded well to digital video resources and Blake (1998), almost twenty years ago, who promoted the use of multimedia approaches to foreign language learning. Although the types of multimedia have evolved since the late 1990s, this research found that students became very engaged in all the activities which were supported by multimedia and ITs in general (see Table 6.6).

6.4.3.4 Body with games

Edmodo was used as a resource for card games and internet board games, both of which used Chinese language for the moves to play. The rules for additional ‘number’ games were posted on Edmodo as were links to other games. Edmodo expanded the number of possible games where practising Chinese vocabulary for numbers was enhanced. These findings are supported by the research of Ang and Zaphiris (2008) who found the introduction of computer games were successful activities for language learning.

6.4.4 How Edmodo supported Chinese language and cultural awareness activities

The activities designed for teaching Chinese language to the more advanced learners also incorporated Edmodo in a supporting role. The two categories of activities were more advanced lingual opportunities and cultural awareness.

With the more advanced language lessons, Edmodo’s supporting role enabled:

- a space for all to participate and gave voice to the ‘shy’ students.
- discussion, comments and sharing of ideas.
- the advantage of additional time for practice and self-directed follow up of ideas.

As the students were introduced to additional and more advanced intercultural awareness activities Edmodo’s supporting role enabled:

- increased opportunities for off-class exploration of Chinese culture.
- misunderstandings of Chinese popular culture to be confronted.
- videos of songs, cartoons and movies to be re-watched in students' own time.

6.4.5 Final comment

With the supporting role of Edmodo, students were able to practice Chinese on a social media platform. They could research, share and discuss their own related topics and content. Less and less instructions were given on Edmodo as the students' skills in navigating the site increased with a subsequent increase in their skills as independent learners.

There was considerable teacher involvement in the organisation of the learning activities on Edmodo, and this may be a negative finding for teachers' use of Edmodo if out of school time is limited.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This thesis is an account of efforts by the teacher-researcher in researching the feasibility and effectiveness of combining traditional ‘in-class’ and Edmodo ‘off-class’ Chinese language teaching and learning in the context of an Australian public school. This research explored the question: How can social media (Edmodo in this case) best exert a supporting role in facilitating students’ Chinese language learning? The contributory research questions were:

1. Is there a space within current Chinese language teaching and learning pedagogies to introduce Edmodo?
2. In what ways/strategies can Edmodo be used to supplement on-class teaching and enhance students’ Chinese language learning? and
3. What activities can be implemented to support Chinese language learning through Edmodo?

The research questions developed out of the teacher-researcher's observations that there was ample availability and use of information technology and digital devices available in Australian classrooms.

Further inspiration to undertake this investigation came from what was perceived as issues in what was, the current observable Chinese teaching program, including the disadvantageously limited length of classes, their frequency and organization. To enable students' Chinese learning process to be continuous, Edmodo – a popular social website created for educational purposes – was introduced, to enhance classroom teaching and extend students' related knowledge. The main functions provided by Edmodo were posting/reposting, discussions, polls, quizzes, assignments, and questions and answers. Class content was posted on Edmodo for the students' review. Students' feedback, questions, comments and quiz results were also displayed and forwarded to every user. Students not only learned Chinese language but also shared a broader language learning experience using the social network technology. Edmodo broke the boundaries of language learning, and this experimental teaching method realized the goal of creating a continuous Chinese learning experience for Australian students.

This chapter begins by summarizing the first three chapters of this thesis, which includes background information, literature review and research methodology. It then summarizes the findings from the evidentiary chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). The chapter continues with a discussion of the limitations of this research and outlines some implications for Chinese language teaching and learning practice. Recommendations for further research conclude the chapter.

7.2 Summary of Chapters

This thesis was structured into seven chapters. Below is a summary of each.

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the research topic from the perspectives of social context, the teacher-researcher's personal experiences and the overall significance of this research. The research questions were stated as the framework for the research.

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature related to second language teaching (SLT) as the overriding context of this research. L1/L2 transfer and scaffolding as strategies for SLT were then appraised. Social media in general and its application in educational contexts provided additional literature to be reviewed. The detailed features and functions of Edmodo were reviewed specifically.

Chapter 3 outlined the methodology used in this research. It began with the justification for choosing qualitative research as the most suitable methodology to explore the research questions. Case study as the research design was proposed along with the outline of the data collection and analysis tools. The principles of triangulation, reliability and validity were explained along with the ethical considerations and clearances that were obtained prior to the conduct of the research.

Chapter 4 provided an account of the teacher-researcher's early experiences as a Chinese language teacher in Australian public schools. Actual situations as a volunteer Chinese teacher were described and some of the limitations in traditional classroom teaching within the program were identified. Research tools including reflective journals, interviews and questionnaires were used to collect information

about students' Chinese learning experiences. Coding and quantitative analysis were used for data analysis for the teacher-researcher to explore the possibilities for introducing Edmodo into the Chinese language teaching and learning program.

Chapter 5 presented the evidence and the findings from introducing Edmodo into the Chinese language learning space. Interview data, excerpts from reflective journal entries and the answers to questions posed to the students were discussed which led to the findings that the teaching strategies of L1/L2 transfer and scaffolding could be used successfully on class as well as off-class through Edmodo. Edmodo as a social networking platform to engage students in Chinese language learning was successfully implemented.

Chapter 6 presented the data collected from the activities designed to enhance Chinese language and cultural awareness. With the beginning students Edmodo supported their success with learning Chinese language through the multimedia activities: 'eyes on picture'; 'ears to music'; 'attention on video' and 'body with games'. As the students became more advanced the content and activities shifted to more difficult language activities and intercultural awareness. Excerpts from reflective journal entries and online responses from the students provide the data that were analysed.

Chapter 7 provides the concluding remarks and a summary of the findings as the main research question: How can social media (Edmodo in this case) best exert a supporting role in facilitating students' Chinese language learning? was answered.

7.3 Research findings

From an educational perspective this thesis explored the social media platform Edmodo as a method to support Chinese language teaching and learning. The research findings answered the research questions proposed in Chapter 1. These research questions were aligned with the research literature on the use of social media for educational purposes and have provided a context for critical thoughtful reflection on teaching and learning in Australian public schools.

Significant findings were discovered during the research process which supported the overall theme of this research which developed from proposing the question: ‘Can teaching Chinese language to Australian students be supported through implementing a social network website – Edmodo?’ Data were collected and analysed by using a qualitative case study research methodology, with evidence collected by the researcher during and after the Chinese language lessons in Australian schools. The key concepts in Chinese language teaching in this research were L1/L2 transfer, scaffolding and social networking. Each proved to have a positive impact on students’ Chinese learning when delivered through Edmodo. In the discussions in sections 5.5.1 and in Chapter 6 section 6.3 examples of students’ engagement with Chinese language learning on-class as well as off-class suggests that these teaching strategies can parallel with the Edmodo platform as a method to introduce Chinese language lessons to students.

7.3.1 Addressing the research questions

Main Research Question

How can social media (Edmodo in this case) best exert a helping role in facilitating student's language learning?

The results of this research indicate that teaching Australian students Chinese through combining classroom and related Edmodo activities had successful outcomes as follows: 1) a classroom and Internet combined learning mode provided students with continuous Chinese language learning; 2) Internet-based Chinese learning provided opportunities to develop students' interests through further explorations of a topic and 3) Edmodo as an educational social network website developed students' independent and collaborative learning skills.

Contributory research questions

Chapter 4 addressed the first contributory research question: *Is there a space within current Chinese language teaching and learning pedagogies to introduce Edmodo?*

The first issue observed in addressing this research question was the identification of the limited time allocated to Chinese language learning in BR Primary School. Figure 4.1 outlined the amount of time allocated to Chinese language learning and in comparison to mathematics timetabling it received less than a quarter. The lack of time negatively impacted on students learning as revealed in the data analysis of Table 4.2 where 38 students indicated the Chinese lessons were 'too rushed' and 69 students 'wanted more time' for language learning. This finding is supported by Vandergrift (2011), who contends time to practice language learning is critical.

Similarly discontinuity of lessons also contributed to challenges for students' memorization of targeted Chinese vocabulary. The study by Kardaleska (2009) further supports that lesson continuity is a key to successful, sustained second language learning.

The findings in this chapter have indicated that there is a gap in the current strategies of classroom Chinese language teaching and learning due to the lack of time available and the subsequent discontinuity of language lessons. These findings open a space for introducing Edmodo in Chinese learning.

Chapter 5 continued to explore this space for implementing Edmodo by considering the second contributory research question: *In what ways/strategies can Edmodo be used to supplement on-class teaching and enhance students' Chinese language learning?*

As Edmodo was introduced to support the on-class Chinese language lessons the following findings have been identified in terms of the key strategies and concepts, L1/L2 transfer, scaffolding lessons and using social media – Edmodo as a teaching tool.

L1/L2 transfer

L1/L2 transfer in second language teaching has been noted by researchers Cummins (2008), Holzman (2008) and Read (2008) as a very successful strategy. In this research Chinese culture was taught in parallel with specific language and vocabulary development using L1/L2 knowledge transfer during the on-class lessons as well as in the Edmodo posts. Implementing this strategy enabled students'

engagement in the online space. Examples of their self-study to further their knowledge of the Chinese language topics are recorded in the data (see Table 5.2).

Scaffolding

Scaffolding students' learning was implemented in this research by presenting basic information as the building blocks for more advanced learning (Berk and Winsler, 1995; Senior 2011). This strategy was able to be successfully implemented within the Edmodo site as the teacher-researcher's scaffolded instructions and guided discussions and posts towards more advanced learning. The multi-functional social media website is equipped with easy access for students to generate and exchange ideas on learning Chinese, and with the teacher-researcher's scaffolded support students were motivated to develop independent learning skills such as responding and raising questions, initiating discussions and doing their own research to extend the class-based topics.

Overall, Chapter 5 data reveal that with the use of Edmodo students were able to:

1. access and develop their skills in collaborative learning.
2. increase their time devoted to Chinese language learning.
3. develop the skills in self-directed learning.

These findings are in agreement with studies purporting the role of schools in nurturing students collaborative and networking skills in the Web 2.0 world (Rosenfeld, 2007) and drawing on students' existing skills as digital natives (Prensky, 2001) to be a key issue.

Chapter 6 investigated the contributory research question: *What activities can be implemented to support Chinese language learning through Edmodo?*

The activities uploaded to Edmodo were used to support on-class Chinese language learning in the following ways:

- Knowledge imparted in the classroom was put up on Edmodo along with additional learning materials for students to review.
- Students were invited to post any comments, ideas or resources related to Chinese learning on the public page.
- Students practiced Chinese language activities online through reposting, sharing, forwarding and discussing, as Edmodo enabled students to access resources at any time.
- The process of knowledge building was clearly evident to the students as through Edmodo activities, their knowledge was stored and accumulated on the site.

The findings were that through the Edmodo-based activities (utilising a multimedia approach; visual, audio-visual, games within the lesson content of Chinese language and culture learning) – Edmodo’s supporting role enabled:

- a space for all to participate and gave voice to the ‘shy’ students.
- interactive discussions, comments and sharing of ideas amongst the students.
- the advantage of additional time for practice and self-directed follow up of new Chinese language vocabulary.

The following sections of the research findings list the advantages of using Edmodo to support on-class Chinese language teaching and learning.

7.3.2 Continuity of the Chinese learning environment from class to Edmodo

Teachers can provide relevant and interesting learning resources or quick assessments (quizzes) on Edmodo for students to reflect on what they have learnt. Students can also be encouraged to discuss the topic in order to form new ideas and understandings of the learned knowledge.

7.3.3 Developing students' interests

Evidence in Chapter 5.4.2 *After-class learning* discloses that Edmodo provided students with opportunities to pursue their interests further by engaging with this social media platform. Rather than set pencil and paper homework as a review and practice strategy, the teacher-researcher engaged the students with interactive activities and games with Edmodo as practice strategies. Examples are provided of how this approach (Chapter 6) resulted in the students showing that their interests were sparked through this strategy of Chinese language teaching.

7.3.4 Developing independent and collaborative learning skills on Edmodo

Students were encouraged to share ideas about the learning topics/concepts with others and during this process they could be encouraged to develop multiple independent and collaborative learning skills such as forming learning groups, raising questions and doing independent research which extends their learning of

Chinese. Evidence in chapter four, five and six indicated students enjoyed raising questions and initiating discussions on Edmodo.

7.3.5 Inappropriate use of technology

Although very positive findings relating to student outcomes were identified in this study when Edmodo was incorporated with on-class lessons, the risk of students' inappropriate use of technology needs to be cited. Farber et al., (2012) have cautioned that overly using technological devices can cause undesirable outcomes to students' emotional, psychological and physical development. They further contend that young people's excessive use of online technology can result in negative offline consequences such as depression, social anxiety, aggression and social isolation. The proliferation of electronic devices such as computers and mobile phones has been implicated in the poor sleep of young people in the forms of later bedtimes, less time in bed, shorter sleep duration and daytime sleepiness (Gamble et al., 2014). Adolescent's insufficient sleep can lead to school drowsiness so that they become less engaged in classroom learning. It can impair their learning outcomes in a negative way. Excessive use of technologies can also lead to stress as Padma et al. (2015) point out that stress level can be high among people working with computers and the internet, and hyper stress can result in emotional and psychological problems, as well as physical health. Graham (2015) suggests the prevalence of internet addiction could be a serious issue in personal life, family relationships, social behaviour and academic status. As there is the potential for over-enthusiasm for e-learning, a cautionary note is cited here for the need to establish parameters to inform its use in classrooms.

Therefore, strategies need to be considered to mediate the tendency for students becoming addicted to technology. One strategy is to develop student's Emotional Intelligence (EI) to help them self-regulate their time spent on technological devices. Researchers believe that EI is a set of skills that can help students to control their experiences. Research by Hamissi, Babaie, Hosseini and Babaie, (2013) found that students with high EI scores were less likely to be internet addicted and were more capable of balancing their time spent on technologies. Teachers can model and demonstrate to students about the correct way to use the internet, such as setting a time limit for computer use in class, discussing technology 'smart use', and working with families to reinforce the positive behaviours of students using technologies.

Another strategy is that teachers can keep the continuity of learning by using the internet in a supporting role, rather than giving children the impression that they are totally depending on it. The classroom lesson should still be seen as the primary part of Chinese language learning, and this requires teachers to maintain reflections and evaluations to ensure their lessons are engaging and captivating for students. As was demonstrated in Chapter 5, Edmodo was used as a platform to complement classroom teaching – an online resource for reviewing and extending learning opportunities delivered to the students in class.

7.3.6 Workload for teachers

In terms of explaining the huge workload for teachers who cannot be expected to be available 24/7, Edmodo is a platform aimed at encouraging students to collaborate and also to study in private, hence students are the main participants. Teachers do not necessarily have to be available online at all times, but their role is to support and

supervise students' learning. Teachers can check the posts on Edmodo according to a structured timetable or their own preferred schedule, as a part of their lesson planning and assessment strategies. They can even smartly utilise the opportunity of collecting data from Edmodo to conduct lesson reflection and evaluation. Voyiatzaki and Avouris (2014) state that online learning communities benefit both students and teachers.

7.3.7 Contributions to knowledge

7.3.7.1 Debates concerning the teaching of Hanzi

This thesis makes a significant contribution to the debate concerning if, and when, Chinese characters should be taught to young learners (Shen 2005; Tse et al., 2006). This research has provided evidence that with thoughtful planning students can be supported to successfully learn some Hanzi in their early stages of Chinese language learning. The evidence in Chapter 5 reports that students responded positively to Hanzi learning when lessons were scaffolded to begin with basic and easy hieroglyphics, and where Edmodo played a supportive role in discussions around the Hanzi learning. Engagement with Edmodo as a positive experience for students was also evident in Chapter 6 section 6.2.1 Figure 6.2 and Chapter 5 section 5.4.3.

7.3.7.2 L1 and L2 transfer

To best exert a positive role in facilitating student's language learning, the teacher plays an indispensable role. By using effective teaching strategies which integrate lessons with Edmodo teaching, students can be better supported to utilise this social media in order to promote their learning. In this case study, L1/L2 knowledge

transfer was applied through the practice of teaching Chinese language incorporating cultural knowledge, and students were invited to reflect on their first language as well as their own sociocultural context, to compare and make connections between their first and second languages. Either in class teaching or Edmodo teaching, L1/L2 knowledge transfer is equally important in language teaching and learning.

7.3.7.3 Scaffolding

Scaffolding as a teaching strategy (Senior, 2011) was also applied throughout the research. Scaffolding student's Chinese learning on Edmodo was implemented through the practice of introducing new topics/concepts to capture student's learning interest, raising thought-provoking questions to maintain student's curiosity; using 'quizzes' to assess students' learning results; providing relevant and useful resources to support and extend students' learning; and with reducing the instructions, intentionally guiding students to develop the disposition of investigation and the skills of independent learning.

7.3.7.4 Edmodo – a successful strategy

Internet learning resources are abundant and come in a variety of forms including textual, visual, audio and video that can be presented to students through the platform of Edmodo. Students participating in this research have shown good Internet and technology competency in terms of their engagement and active involvement in learning Chinese on Edmodo. Teachers can therefore utilise Internet resources to plan for students' learning through Edmodo.

7.4 Research reflections

Reflecting upon the experience of teaching Chinese in Australian schools, a deeper understanding of the following issues was gained:

Firstly, this research enabled the teacher-researcher to compare and note the differences between the Chinese and Australian education systems – each having positive and negative aspects. The teacher-researcher needed to develop a different set of teaching practices to accommodate the different teaching and learning styles in the Australian school context. In addition to Chinese language teaching, Chinese culture and general knowledge were also part of the teaching program. At the same time, it was a steep learning curve for the teacher-researcher to develop knowledge of the Australian school curriculum, learning goals and pedagogies. Pedagogically the data from student feedback informed the teacher-researcher's ongoing practice. The Chinese language learning (where practice and follow up engaged the students to be self-motivated as they chose to use Edmodo) is confirmed through the results in Chapter 5, Table 5.7.

Secondly, inspired by the prevalent use of information technology in Australian classrooms, the idea emerged that together, classroom and Edmodo teaching, could create a continuous Chinese learning experience. Limited by time and space in a classroom-only program, the idea to extend students' Chinese learning from the on-site classroom into an online space seemed possible. With the assistance of Edmodo the daily teaching and learning program consisted of: students were taught a new topic in every class, along with the new vocabulary and relevant background information. When they became familiar with the topic, they could access the online learning resources through the sharing platform of Edmodo. The teacher-researcher

was the organizer and instructor of the website, posting and sharing the majority of online content. The students who joined in this Chinese learning community were able to post and share the information related to Chinese language and culture onto Edmodo. Activities such as discussion board, quick quiz, questions and answers, notice board, and links sharing were successfully carried forward during the practice. Students expressed their ardent interests in getting involved in this online Chinese learning experience. The research results indicate the success of bringing technology (through Edmodo) into Chinese language teaching and learning. This finding supports the research by Dobler (2012) who found Edmodo provided a positive learning support for students in that it had the capability to flatten classroom walls.

Thirdly, the teacher-researcher's professional development as a teacher in Australia was greatly advanced with growth in knowledge and skill as a Chinese language teacher both in face-to-face and online teaching.

7.5 Research limitations

A number of limitations in this research have been identified and are acknowledged by the teacher-researcher.

7.5.1 Subjectivity/objectivity

As a qualitative research project undertaken by a single teacher-researcher who collected and analysed the data, a limitation would be the findings have been drawn from the researcher's subjective accounts and reflections. For this reason there are no claims for this research to be generalizable.

7.5.2 Research timeframe

This research project was initially planned as an eighteen month project with one year for undertaking the fieldwork in school followed by another half year for analysing data and writing a thesis. As an international student there was a period of adjustment which took at least six months to learn local traditions, improve English language, make connections and acquire knowledge relating to teaching and learning in the Australian context. Additional time would have allowed for a more in-depth development of local literacies and pedagogical skills.

7.5.3 Small scale

This research was conducted in one public school in Western Sydney, and the number of students who participated in the program was limited. Thus the research results cannot be claimed as representative.

7.6 Implications for practice

The implications of this research for Chinese language teaching and learning practice concerns how to integrate on-class lessons with off-class online strategies.

First, online teaching liberates the traditional classroom teaching from time and space limitations. Second, language learning requires a commitment to practice and review. Online learning can provide additional practice time where students do not see this as tedious. Evidence in Chapters 5 and 6 shows the progress and effectiveness of Edmodo's role in supporting Chinese language learning for

Australian students. Second language teachers who feel time pressured with the allocated teaching time per week, may consider implementing an off-class component to their teaching.

A further implication for practice is that teachers could build on the computer skills students already have, when introducing Edmodo or similar social networking platforms to support on-class lessons. In this research introducing Edmodo was convenient and successful as these Stage 3 students were quite computer literate. The practice implications of these findings for educational practice are that these students were actively engaged on the learning platform of Edmodo and the incentive of communicating with peers encouraged them to maintain their online presence. This is a positive student learning behaviour that could be drawn upon by teachers.

7.7 Recommendations for further research

This research explored how Chinese language teaching could be supported by an educational social media website – Edmodo, to address the time and space limitations that singular classroom teaching often faces. Further research that could provide additional findings in this field might include:

- with additional time and funding, including a larger number of students, across all stages in the primary school.
- having more teacher-researchers from the ROSETE program undertaking similar research in different schools.
- undertaking a similar research investigation but implementing another social networking platform.

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Appendix 1: University of Western Sydney Human Ethics Approval

Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751 Australia
Office of Research Services

ORS Reference: H10501 14/001663



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

19 June 2014

Professor Michael Singh
Centre for Educational Research

Dear Michael,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal H10501 "Supporting Student Mandarin Learning Through the Platform of Social Media Edmodo", until 31 December 2014 with the provision of a progress report annually if over 12 months and a final report on completion.

Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of your approval date.
2. A final report will be due at the expiration of your approval period as detailed in the approval letter.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the project continuing. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form:
http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/491130/HREC_Amendment_Request_Form.pdf
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Ethics Committee as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority
6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to the email address humanethics@uws.edu.au.

This protocol covers the following researchers:
Michael Singh, Jinghe Han, Wangqianli Xiong

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Deane".

Professor Elizabeth Deane
Presiding Member,
Human Researcher Ethics Committee

Appendix 2: State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP)



Ms Wangqianli Xiong
UWS Village Penrith Campus TH 8
56 Second Avenue
KINGSWOOD NSW 2747

CORP14/12237
DOC14/336855
SERAP 2014131

Dear Ms Xiong

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Supporting Student Mandarin Learning Through the Platform of Social Media - Edmodo*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.**

This approval will remain valid until 31 December 2014.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Name	Approval expires
Wangqianli Xiong	10/05/2019.

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please email your report to: serap@det.nsw.edu.au.

You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Harriman'.

Dr Susan Harriman
Leader, Quality Assurance Systems
15 July 2014

Policy, Planning and Reporting Directorate
NSW Department of Education and Communities
Level 1, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: 02 9244 5060 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

Appendix 3: Timeline for the research

	July – Sep. 2013	Oct.- Dec. 2013	Jan.- Mar. 2014	Apr.- June 2014	July- Dec. 2014	Jan.-Mar. 2015
Determining the research questions	×					
Literature review	×	×	×	×	×	×
Methodology	×	×		×	×	×
Design the project	×					
Research proposal	×					
Ethics application		×	×			
Revise COC proposal			×			
Participant observation			×	×	×	×
Interview			×	×		
Self-reflection journal	×	×	×	×	×	×
Updating and analysing data				×	×	×
Thesis submission						×

Appendix 4: Participants information sheets

Add School/Institute Name
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751
Australia
Telephone : 0415278086
e-mail : 344370563@qq.com



Participant Information Sheet (General)

Project Title: Supporting Student Mandarin Learning Through the Platform of Social Media Edmodo

Project Summary: Discovering a way to combine in-class teaching and virtual teaching (Edmodo) to support student Mandarin learning. On the basis of traditional classroom teaching, extra virtual teaching on social networks is going to help students reinforce the old knowledge they have learnt and lead them to stimulate self-learning.

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Wangqianli Xiong, Master of Education (Hons) Candidate and School of Education under the Supervision of Prof Michael Singh, Dr Jinghe Han. Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney

How is this study being paid for?

The study is being sponsored by Center for Educational Research .

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to attend group interviews and one survey.

How much of my time will I need to give?

15 minutes needed for each interview, 2 interviews are needed (30 minutes for interviews) and 10 minutes needed for the survey.

What specific benefits will I receive for participating?

You will have an ideal experience of learning Chinese, and you will get a Chinese gift in the end.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me? If so, what will you do to rectify it.

In general, there will be no discomfort in the study. You can withdraw anytime you feel any discomforts. If any discomfort appears in focus group interview, I will stop the interview and choose another time to continue.

How do you intend on publishing the results.

The findings of the research will be published in UWS library.

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report, except as required by law.

Add School/Institute Name
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751
Australia
Telephone :0415-278-086
e-mail :raexiong@hotmail.com



Participant Information Sheet (General)

Project Title: Supporting Student Mandarin Learning Through the Platform of Social Media Edmodo

Project Summary: Discovering a way to combine in-class teaching and virtual teaching (Edmodo) to support student Mandarin learning. On the basis of traditional classroom teaching, extra virtual teaching on social networks is going to help students reinforce the old knowledge they have learnt and lead them to stimulate self-learning.

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Ms Wangqianli Xiong, a master degree research student of Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney under the Supervision of Prof Michael Singh, Dr Jinghe Han. Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney

How is this study being paid for?

The study is being sponsored by Center for Educational Research .

What will I be asked to do?

You will be invited to participate in an interview.

How much of my time will I need to give?

you will have a 15-minute-interview.

What specific benefits will I receive for participating?

You will have a better understanding of Mandarin teaching in class. At the same time, your valuable feedbacks and advices will help students to learn Mandarin and Chinese culture. Any Mandarin teaching strategies which you think is beneficial for students, will be applied in your own class as well.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me? If so, what will you do to rectify it.

In general, there will be no discomfort in the study. You can withdraw anytime you feel any discomforts. If any discomfort appears in focus group interview, I will stop the interview and choose another time to continue.

How do you intend on publishing the results.

Please be assured that only the researchers will have access to the raw data you provide.

Thesis will be submitted to meet the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Honours).

*Please note that the minimum retention period for data collection is five years.

There are a number of government initiatives in place to centrally store research data and to make it available for further research. For more information, see <http://www.andis.org.au/> and <http://www.rdsi.uq.edu.au/about>. Regardless of whether the information you supply or about you is stored centrally or not, it will be stored securely and it will be de-identified before it is made to available to any other researcher.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary; and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate, you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

If you do choose to withdraw, any information that you have supplied will be double deleted or shredded.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?

Please contact Wangqianli Xiong should you wish to discuss the research further before deciding whether or not to participate.

Wangqianli Xiong/ Master of Education (Hons) Candidate/ 0415-278-086

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number]

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.

Appendix 5: Participants consent forms

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services



Participant Consent Form

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text.

Project Title: Supporting Student Mandarin Learning Through the Platform of Social Media Edmodo

I,, consent to participate in the research project titled .

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, 'have had read to me'] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the [insert specific activities] [if applicable] [list all components of involvement, e.g. audio/ video taping to ensure participants can indicate their willingness to participate in all or some of the research]

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Return Address: Room 1.121, Building I, Kingswood Campus, University of Western Sydney

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.

The Approval number is:

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Participant Consent Form for Parents/Caregivers

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators. Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text.

Project Title: Supporting Student Mandarin Learning Through the Platform of Social Media Edmodo

I,, give consent for my child to participate in the research project titled .

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, 'have had read to me'] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child agrees to their participation in the project.

I understand that my child's involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's identity.

I understand that my child's participation in this project is voluntary. I can withdraw my child from the study at any time, without affecting their academic standing or relationship with the school and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time.

I consent to the [insert specific activities] [if applicable] [list all components of involvement, e.g. audio/ video taping to ensure participants can indicate their willingness to participate in all or some of the research]. Please cross out any activity that you do not wish your child to participate in.

**Signed (Parent/
caregiver):**

Signed (child):

Name:

Name:

Date:

Date:

Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Return Address: Room I.121, Building I, Kingswood Campus, University of Western Sydney

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix 6: Interview questions

The interview questions listed below are drafted, changes may occur in real situation.

Interview questions for classroom teachers

1. Do students practice Chinese after class? How about their interests in learning Chinese?
2. Are there any improvements can be done to my Chinese Class?
3. Do you think it is necessary to take exams for student's Chinese learning? If so, what form of exam do you recommend?
4. Do you also use multimedia or even Internet a lot in other classes to facilitate student's study?
5. Have you heard of Edmodo before? Have you used it?
6. How's the student's reaction to use information technology in learning subjects?
7. According to your experiences and speculations, what potential side impacts could be in using social networking as a tool to learn Chinese?
8. Can you give me some of your own ideas about setting up Chinese class in your school?

Interview questions for students

1. Have you taken any Chinese classes before? Can you say anything in Chinese within your memory?
2. Do you like the current Chinese class? What is your opinions about it?
3. Learning Chinese according to text books or various learning materials, which one do you prefer?
4. How do you think of social networking sites, do you like using them?
5. How often do you use Internet?
6. Will you be willing to use social media or other technology-based learning materials to learn Chinese?

Appendix 7: Samples of designed learning materials for students

Larger Numbers :

11	→	10 + 1	(Read 10, then 1)
12	→	10 + 2	
13	→	10 + 3	
⋮			
20	→	2 + 10	(Read 2, then / 0)
21	→	2 + 10 + 1	(Read 2, then / 0, and 1)
22	→	2 + 10 + 2	
⋮			
100	→	1 + Bai	(Read 1, then "Bai")

Months :	月	yuè
January	一 月	1 + yuè
February	二 月	2 + yuè
March	三 月	3 + yuè
April	四 月	4 + yuè
May	五 月	5 + yuè
	⋮	
	⋮	
November	十一 月	11 + yuè
December	十二 月	12 + yuè

So, Month = Number (1-12) + yuè

Appendix 8: Sample of quick quiz in class

11/Mar/2014 Chinese Class

Teacher: Ms Xiong

Name: _____ Class _____

New Vocabulary

Chinese character	pronunciation	meaning
你	Ni	You
我	Wo	I, me
他	Ta	He, Him
她	Ta	She, Her
它	Ta	It
好	Hao	Good, Great
是	Shi	Is, Was, Are, Were

Sentences

我是_____ Wo Shi _____ I am_____

你是_____ Ni Shi _____ You are_____

他（她、它）是_____ Ta Shi _____ He(She, It) is_____

Appendix 9: Sample of student work sheet

Working sheet sample 1

1. Please work out the calculations written in Chinese.

2. Make the match

Dog	Gee
Cat	Too
Chicken	New
Cow	Zhu
Pig	Die Shu
Monkey	Ma
Tiger	Hole
Rabbit	Mao
Kangaroo	Who
Horse	Go